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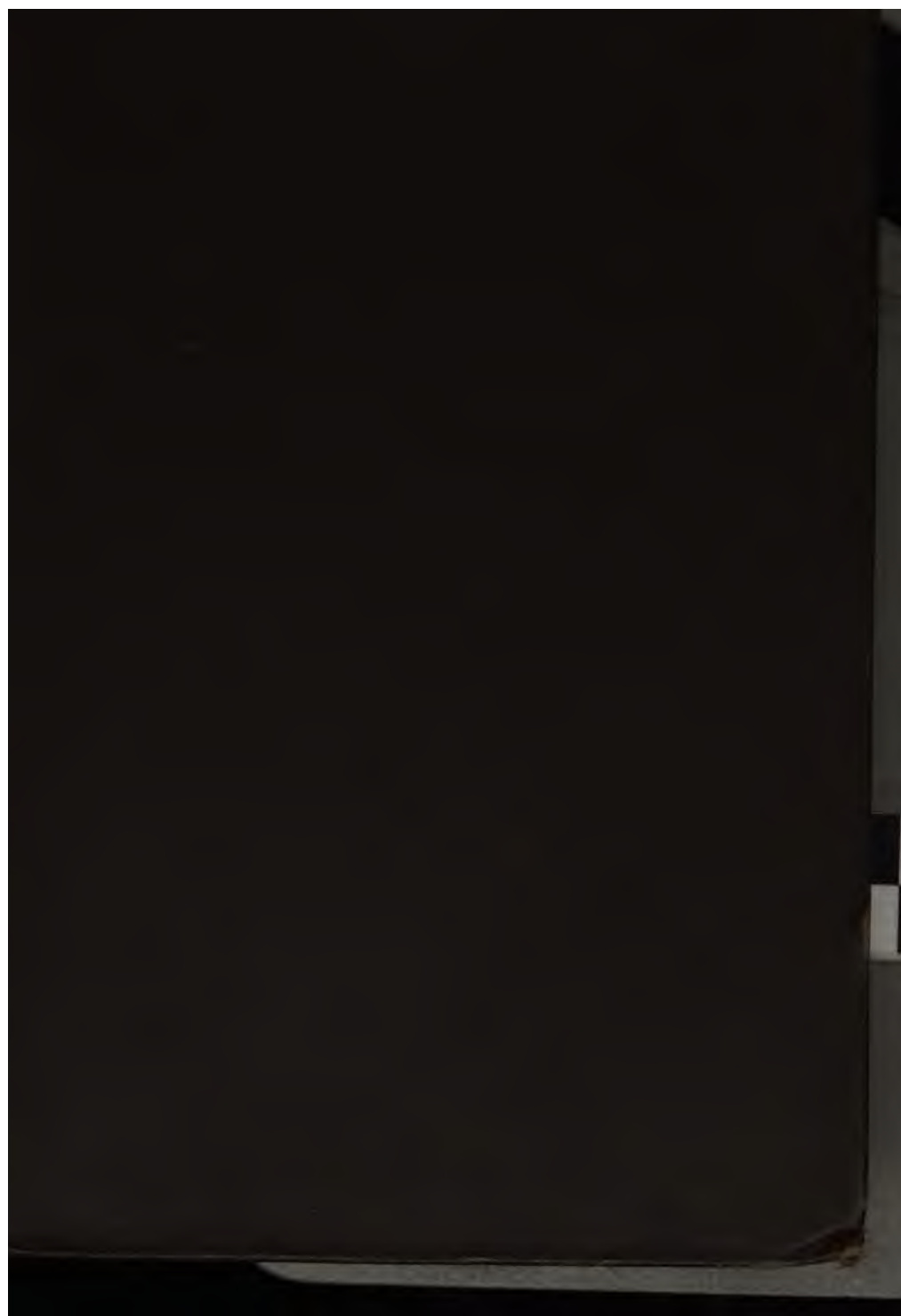
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A MISSING SCIENCE

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SOCIAL EQUALITY

A SHORT STUDY in a MISSING SCIENCE

BY

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SOCIAL EQUALITY.



CHAPTER I.

THE AIM OF MODERN DEMOCRACY.

LET us suppose ourselves in the High Street of an English country town, watching the scene that on any afternoon it might present to us. Before one of the principal shops a large barouche is waiting, and the head of the establishment stands at the carriage door, and takes the 'esteemed orders' of some magnate of the neighbourhood. Meanwhile, along the pavement, move various well-known figures—a spectacled solicitor in his black frock-coat; knots of labourers, their jackets soiled with earth; a grocer's wife, with a boa and corkscrew curls; at the same time a farmer has rattled by in his dog-cart, followed slowly by

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the country rector's phaeton. The central group in the drama is the large barouche with its occupant. All the passers-by turn to it for at least a moment, and acknowledge either by their looks or salutations the importance of the principle that is embodied in it. The solicitor squints at it; the farmer touches his hat to it; the rector waves his hand to it. Nor is this all; for between these minor characters there are looks or salutations also; and they are each charged with a meaning either of respect or of condescension. The whole forms a scene with which we are all familiar; every object and every incident can be imagined without an effort; and few scenes, to many people, could seem more prosaic and common-place.

Let us now introduce into it two further characters—an English Radical and a Continental Democrat; and let us see the way in which it would strike them. Far from regarding it with acquiescent apathy, they would both declare that to their eyes it was full of injustice and abuses, and that all its details sug-

gested the need for change. And we will first listen to the Radical. He would find little difficulty in telling us what *his* change would begin with. He would fix on the barouche, and the county magnate sitting in it ; and his aim, he would say, was to make that sort of thing impossible. The park, the country house, and the game-preserve—above all, the territorial influence, and the constant deference paid to it—these are the evils which the average Radical would fix upon ; and he would say they formed an incubus that at present stifled society. Let the squire or the peer be impoverished, his footmen discharged, his house shut up, his barouche used as a hen-coop, his estate sold in allotments, and his park laid out in building-plots—with the changes implied in this the Radical would be nearly satisfied. Next let us listen to his companion—the more extreme and logical Democrat ; and we shall find that such a change would by no means satisfy *him*. It was a right beginning, he would say, but a beginning only. Having done with the park

and the country house, he would turn with even more severity to the large shop and its owner ; and just as the Radical would abolish the aristocratic type of existence, so he would abolish that of the middle-class capitalist. Landlord and rich shopkeeper, each, he would say, were robbers, living on the labour of the people. The present status of each must be equally done away with ; and the suburban villa is to be respected no more than the mansion. The Democrat, in a word, would overturn everything ; from all persons of property he would abstract some of their possessions ; and what he left them, he would leave them on new conditions. It is indeed hard to imagine any existing arrangement of a household, any existing style of furniture, any existing habits, manners, modes of thought, or amusements, which would be left possible by such a change as he desiderates. Certainly all that hitherto has been connected with high breeding, or with personal culture, would at once be out of the question. The type of character that is born of leisure and study, of

freedom from common cares, of wide commerce with men, of the possession of works of art, and of memories of many lands—for this the democrat would be able to find no place. He might promise us a substitute, of what kind it is doubtful; but it would at any rate be very different from what he had taken away from us. So under his *régime* would be everything. We should almost feel that we were living in a different planet.

It is to some such change as this—a change not merely in forms of government, or in particular lines of policy, but in the distribution of property, the relations between class and class, and the daily conditions of the private lives of each of us—that many men think the modern world is hurrying; and there seems to loom before them some vast social catastrophe of a kind new to history.

Nor is it possible to say that their views are without foundation. We are living at a moment of fierce political passions, and of social passions thinly disguised by politics, which on the surface connect themselves with

many distinct questions, and do in their origin really depend on several. But let us study them where we will, in whatever country and whatever rank of life, and it is sufficiently plain that there is one idea behind all of them. It is an idea which, though it connects itself with national and constitutional movements, does this by the way only; and it rather hides than expresses itself in the local disputes it animates. Its main concern is with a question which, though far more complex in fact, yet appears to be far more simple; and which, partly in virtue of this appearance, appeals to the emotions with far greater directness. That question is the existing structure of society; or, to speak with more precision, its chief structural feature. I refer to its inequalities; partly to those of nominal rank and authority, but principally to those of private life and circumstance. Above are the few who, without manual labour, command, at will, the manual labour of the many. Below are the many whose labour is thus commanded, and who never themselves taste any of the

choicer fruits of it. The consequence is that though in the scale of classes there may at no special point be any distinct break, yet life at one extreme and life at the other are practically two wholly different things. Such is the arrangement with which we are all at present familiar. It is common to every civilised country, and is implied more or less in the daily life of all of us. It is precisely on this arrangement that modern thought is fixing itself; and for the first time in history it is being offered to our practical judgment as an arrangement that can, and consequently must, be altered. Before our own epoch, the professed party of progress aimed only at equality in political rights; not at equality in the conditions of private life. The latter had no doubt been dreamed about by a few visionary philosophers; but so little was it contemplated by the common sense of men, that, amidst the wildest excesses of the first French Revolution, '*landed and other property*' was declared '*to be for ever sacred*.' That Revolution attacked the power, but not the riches, of the aris-

tocracy; and it aimed at protecting, not at abolishing, poverty. Since then, however, the professed party of progress has put a new end before it; and though it still attacks power as it used to do, it does so with a further motive. Its real end now is social, not political, equality; and by social equality it means a very distinct thing—an equality in material circumstances. Accordingly, just as formerly it connected progress with the destruction of privilege, so now it connects it with the re-distribution of property. This conception, amongst the special party I speak of, is every day becoming clearer; and, in the opinion of many observers, the party is itself increasing. Its members are certainly very widely spread; and though in different places their guise or disguise is different, we can still trace their teachings in nearly every civilised country. Sometimes this may be more, and sometimes less, qualified; nor is its drift always equally obvious. But when we consider how industriously it is being propagated, how strong are the passions it appeals to, and how far it has

already roused them, we cannot but recognise that our existing civilisation is, for bad or good, confronted by a very formidable enemy ; and that there is much to justify alike the hopes and the apprehensions which are at present dividing every nation in Europe, and which, unless we are much misinformed, are not unknown in America.

This fact, though already familiar to so many people, may, when thus bluntly stated, possibly startle others. It will do so less if they see it in its true proportions. It is by no means meant that the hopes and apprehensions spoken of are as yet universally of a very violent kind. In many cases they are so slight as to be hardly feelings at all, but shadows of feelings that really exist elsewhere : and again in others, where they certainly are violent, we can afford to smile at and to pass them by as fantastic. In other words, the existing structure of society, though it is threatened, is not yet tottering ; and there is still ample time to avert or to prepare for the catastrophe. Thus grave as the situation is, we may view it with-

out excitement. It will suggest anticipations to us, which we shall not let it inspire. It will rouse our anxiety, but it will not disturb our judgment. We shall see that some social convulsion is not in the least impossible; we shall see, on the contrary, that many things tend to produce it; but we shall see also that as yet it is not inevitable, and we shall yield equally little to panic and to a sense of security. If we are wise, what we shall do is this. Recognising what, if a struggle really happened, would, as matters now stand, be its one aim and object, we shall set ourselves betimes, in a true scientific spirit, to inquire carefully how far this object is attainable, or what would be the results of any great attempt to attain it—and this for a double reason. Could any positive conclusions on these points be arrived at, and forced on the world's attention as verified truths of science, they would certainly leave their impress on the present course of affairs, and it is quite possible that they might profoundly change it. In any case they would put us in the only right position,

either to understand the movement of the present, or to provide for and face the future.

Strange, however, as the fact may seem, the inquiry I speak of has never yet been attempted. The world is fast dividing itself into two hostile parties, the one denying and the other asserting certain social propositions. The propositions are distinct ; the assertions and the denials are vehement ; but if we ask for their scientific basis, both sides will be equally unable to answer us. Nothing will be forthcoming in the shape of connected reasoning that would be for a moment recognised by any scientific thinker. I do not say that there might not be scattered arguments, each possessing separately a true scientific character : such, indeed, may be found in the pages of many writers. But no writer as yet has ever dealt with them systematically. They are of little force, because they have not been enough insisted on ; and of little significance, because they have not been followed up or connected. Thus though opinions on the subject are growing daily more marked and positive, they

are opinions only, they are not scientific knowledge ; nor can one set of them definitely dispel the other. They are thus both useless in any practical controversy. Each may satisfy the man who is not inclined to doubt it ; but it cannot compel the reluctant assent of any one to whose passions or interests it would be likely to prove hostile. The result is this, that men are as much in the dark in our day with regard to social problems as they were before Hume's day with regard to economic problems ; and for a precisely similar reason. The science as yet is missing by which alone they can be elucidated. It is as completely non-existent at the close of the nineteenth century, as political economy was at the beginning of the eighteenth.

The Conservatives illustrate this fact far more clearly than the Democrats, though they are not in reality such complete examples of it. When they criticise, for instance, any scheme that seems to tamper with property—and such essentially are the special schemes they contend against—they have practically

but one way of condemning it; they call it a scheme of theft: and if they can justify this description of it, they seem to think that the last word has been said. And once no doubt they would have been perfectly right in thinking so. Once *theft* was a word weighted with common odium; and it discredited any project on which it could be fixed effectually. But this is precisely the point at which the great change has occurred. The Conservatives, as we have seen already, are now faced by a theory which places theft in a wholly different light; and if we give the word its ordinary and immemorial meaning, it, according to this theory, is not a sin, but a necessity. In other words, it is now maintained deliberately that the key to all social progress is some re-distribution of property, and some violation of rights that have been hitherto held sacred. Thus to call the democrats a set of thieves and confiscators, is merely to apply names to them which they have no wish to repudiate; and their opponents, if they think in this way to discredit them, are begging the very point

which it is their first business to prove. They must prove that property is a thing which should be respected, before they can secure a verdict against those who do not respect it. The whole situation is really contained in that. Property in our day is theoretically in a new position. It is the defendant now, not the plaintiff as formerly, and the jury consists of the millions who have least obvious cause to be tender with it. This, no doubt, may seem a strange state of affairs, but the sooner we see it in its true light the better. We must realise once for all that the old conservative arguments are by this time wholly obsolete. The old traditions that were once thought sacred, the moral principles that were once thought absolute—we have to defend them, not to appeal to them ; or rather we have to see how far they are defensible. Thus it would be idle to show, in the event of any great confiscation, how unjustly the few would suffer. The only reply would be, ‘ *So much the worse for the few !* ’ If property is to be defended at all, it must be defended on wider grounds, and

in a very much deeper way. It must be shown that an attack on it would not injure the few only, but that it would equally bring ruin on the many; and this can be done only by an accurate and scientific demonstration of either or both of two distinct positions.

One is, that however desirable it might be to equalise property, it would be impossible to do so for more than a single moment; that the equality of such a moment would be one of want, horror, and consternation, not of prosperity; and that the old inequalities would again arise out of it, only changed in having their harsher features exaggerated.

The other is that, even supposing that permanent equality were not thus unattainable, but that it could be really established as a stable social condition, its establishment would be not to the interest of even the poorest classes: in other words, that the inequality now surrounding us is not an accidental defect which we must minimise as far as possible; but that it is, on the contrary, an efficient cause of civilisation—that it is the

cause of plenty, but not the cause of want ; and that want would be increased, not cured, by its abolition.

Such are the positions which the Conservative party must prove, or at least one or other of them. Nothing less will be of the least avail. Should we find on examination that we are unable to do this ; should we find that property is capable of being equalised permanently, and that the majority would profit by its equalisation, then such of us as belong to the higher ranks of life must conclude that, as a class, our days are already numbered. If we are philanthropists, we shall hail the coming change ; and if we are philosophers, we shall at least submit to it. Should our examination, on the other hand, lead us to an opposite conclusion, should we find that the above positions embody scientific truths, and that they can further be rigidly shown to do so—shown to do so by a systematic appeal to facts—we shall then have placed property in a new state of security ; its enemies will be reduced to the ranks of

either quacks or criminals; the present ferment of opinion will subside gradually, and the friends of progress, though they will not relinquish their efforts, will turn them in another direction.

To produce, however, either of these results is possible in one way only—the way which I have just now indicated. The matter must be made the subject of its own special science; and that science yet has to be created. I propose in the present volume to point out its limits, and the exact order of facts of which it will take cognisance. I propose, further, to review the most important of these last, and to state in outline the chief general conclusions which, by strict scientific reasoning, we shall be forced to arrive at from them.

Here, however, I must anticipate three sets of objections.

In the first place, it may be argued on behalf of the democratic party that such a science as that I have spoken of, so far from being unattempted, has been already long in

existence, and claims as its students a whole school of Continental speculators. Such men may be pointed to as Proudhon, Louis Blanc, and Karl Marx; and not only may it be said that they have made great scientific discoveries, but discoveries which have had a momentous practical influence. Indeed it may be said that I have just been admitting this.

In the second place, it may be argued on behalf of the conservative party that the doctrines of the above thinkers are answered and refuted by those of the orthodox economists, or the more recent speculations of sociologists, such as Mr. Herbert Spencer; that the supposed missing science is merely political economy, or sociology under another name, and that thus the field of discussion is already fully occupied.

In the third place, supposing both these objections dismissed, there remains another, which may presently seem more forcible. It may be admitted that the truths which I propose to deal with scientifically have with-

out doubt never been so dealt with ; but this, it may be argued, is for a very excellent reason. It may be argued that we know them sufficiently by the light of our common sense ; that we all appeal to them as self-evident in our daily conduct and conversation, and that to set them forth with a show of scientific exactitude would be nothing more than an empty intellectual ceremony.

All these objections I shall meet in their proper order. With regard to the doctrines of Continental democracy, in spite of the influence and seeming coherence of their systems, I shall show that in reality they are not men of science at all ; that if here and there they have hit on a right conclusion, this has happened only by accident ; that they have had no glimpse of the true inductive method ; that they have merely reasoned from certain assumed first principles ; and that their main teachings have as little relation to fact as had the physical speculations of Thales, or the dreams of the mediæval alchemists. With regard to political economy, I shall

show that though it touches the science in question, it barely overlaps the borders of it ; and I shall show a similar, though not quite the same, thing with regard to sociology, and other allied studies. Finally, I shall show that though certain of the facts I shall dwell upon are without doubt common-place, this by no means renders a further study of them superfluous. I shall remind the reader how the essence of scientific knowledge consists less in the discovery of facts that are altogether strange to us, than in the analysis and arrangement of facts that are at least partially familiar ; and I shall hope to convince him that, at least in the present case, common sense is a less advance upon ignorance than scientific knowledge is upon common sense.

The last two of these three positions will be explained in detail presently. But the first lies on the threshold of the whole inquiry, and must be dealt with thoroughly before we can proceed further.

I have said that the modern social problem

has never yet been studied scientifically; but I have not said that it has not been studied at all. On the contrary, although there is no true science of it, there is a voluminous body of doctrines which aspires to pass for such, and which has probably had a more marked effect upon action than has ever been had by any other speculations. These doctrines are sufficiently unmistakable; and the first point I dwelt upon was their existence and their immense influence. They are those of the avowed leaders of the modern democratic movement; and these men stand alone in two points. They are not alone only in attacking our social inequalities; but they are alone in even claiming to have studied them scientifically, or pronounced any reasoned opinion with regard to their origin, their justice, or their stability.¹ Thus the present struggle,

¹ Sociologists, as I shall show presently, utterly fail to see at what point the question ought to be grasped; and the orthodox economists, as I shall show presently also, assume the point at issue and make hardly any effort to discuss it. What the democratic doctrinaires contend is, not that the conclusions of the economists do not follow from their premisses, but that

in so far as it is other than physical, has, up to the present moment, been altogether one-sided. All that bears any semblance of organised thought or system has belonged to the attacking party; and, force excepted, it has been met by nothing but an obsolete dogmatism that cannot even explain itself.

This would be true in the history of human action, even if it were not true, as it is, in the history of human thought. In other words, there might be a scientific literature of conservatism as voluminous as that of democracy, but it would not affect the argument. For it is a literature, if it exists at all, of which the

these premisses postulate a certain condition of society, which, though it undoubtedly does exist at present, yet demands and is capable of alteration. Whilst the present condition lasts, they not only admit but insist that the theories of the economists are rigidly sound and true. Their argument is that that condition can be altered, and a society produced in which they shall be true no longer. Thus, though in the event of any practical struggle the present race of economists might be personally in opposition to the Democrats, this would be for other reasons than those which their own science supplies them with. The theoretic tenets by which the two parties are distinguished not only do not militate, but they do not even meet. What the economists assert the Democrats do not deny; what the Democrats assert the economists have never adequately considered.

world knows nothing. It has had no effect on public opinion. No class or party has ever mastered or been moved by its teachings; and in the world of action, knowledge is non-existent that does not exert some practical influence. If we turn, on the other hand, to the speculative doctrines of democracy, we shall detect their operation in nearly every popular movement that has marked the present century. The Democrats, in rebelling against the established order of things, have always encouraged and justified themselves by an appeal to certain doctrines which they take to be scientific truths. The Conservatives, in repressing these rebellions, have neither wanted theoretic encouragement nor cared about theoretic justification. They have had their convictions certainly, no less than their adversaries; and these, to say the least of them, have been equally firm and honest; but they have rested on a different basis. They have been inherited, not acquired. They have been regarded as things so sacred and self-evident that it would be as idle to prove

their truth as it would be wicked to question it; and thus those who have not only questioned but denied it have been treated less as mistaken men, than as lunatics or as dangerous criminals. They have been repressed or neglected, but they have never yet been refuted. It is largely to this treatment that their growing power is due. From their being the only party that has professed scientifically to defend itself, a superstition has gone abroad that they are the only party capable of scientific defence; and so widely is this superstition spreading itself, that many secretly yield to it who regard it with the utmost horror. Not only does it strengthen the Democrats, but it troubles the Conservatives; and many of the latter entertain a dark misgiving that it represents, after all, the actual truth of things. This must be a familiar fact to every one who has watched modern opinion in the higher ranks of society. The remark, for instance, may often be heard now-a-days that it is only natural for the poorer classes to be Democrats; and the reason given is that '*they*

have everything to gain by a change. Perhaps more frequent still are the even plainer sayings, that '*Things by this time have passed beyond our control;*' and that '*there is nothing left for us but to wait till the crash comes.*' The significance of this helpless despondency is unmistakable. It is a piece of evidence of the strongest possible kind that, so far as science and accurate reason go, conservatism possesses as ~~yet~~ neither defence nor explanation of itself.

I therefore venture to say, though I shall prove the fact more fully afterwards that, with regard to the question of progress in the democratic sense of the word, the only doctrines extant which even pretend to system, or which have ever had any intellectual influence, are the doctrines of the Democrats themselves. The first step, therefore, towards establishing a true social science must be the complete exposure of those doctrines which at present usurp the place of it.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRINCIPLES OF MODERN DEMOCRACY.

I PROPOSE, then, to examine briefly the general theory of modern democracy, and the methods by which it has been arrived at. But here, very likely, a certain difficulty may suggest itself. The Democrats and their theories, it may be said with perfect justice, differ amongst themselves in many important ways. Proudhon, for instance, differed from Louis Blanc; Lassalle differed from Schulze Delitzsch; and Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain would differ from all four, or may very likely seem to have next to nothing in common with them. The reader, therefore, may be inclined to argue that, though it is well enough for general purposes to regard the Democrats as a single class, yet we can by no means do this for the purposes of accurate

criticism. Such, however, is not really the case. The differences spoken of, important as they may be practically, are differences not as to principles, but mainly as to the application of principles. The principles themselves are in all cases the same ; and it is with these alone that we are here concerned to deal. If we can show these to be false, we may leave the disputes based on them to take care of themselves.


Let us consider, then, what these principles are—principles which unite Mr. Chamberlain with Proudhon, and Mr. Bright with Louise Michel. They are very simple, and can be very easily stated. The first and foremost of them is contained in the abstract proposition, that *the perfection of society involves social equality*. Let us be careful to see what the words exactly mean. They do not mean that equality is the same thing as perfection—for equality in itself might be merely equality in destitution : but they do mean that inequality is essentially an evil and an imperfection. The Democrat postulates, no less than the Conser-

vative, the conservation and even the increase of existing material luxuries. But, these being granted, his distinctive contention is that the chief evil of life is the unequal distribution of them ; and that progress consists of such changes as tend to make it equal. This doctrine resolves itself into the following train of reasoning. Happiness is proportionate to distributable means of enjoyment ; of these means there is only a certain quantity, which has to be distributed amongst a certain number of people ; and consequently when one class has more than an equal share, somewhere else there is a corresponding deficit. The luxury of one man means the privation of another ; the high rank of one man means the degradation of another. Thus, happiness being proportionate to riches and social status, social inequality, in its very nature, implies unhappiness somewhere. It is, in a word, identical with social wrong. Accordingly, the end of progress being the diffusion of human happiness, progress is essentially a constant approach towards equality.

Such is the great first principle of all

modern Democrats, from the extremest to the most moderate sections of them. How far it is held that equality can ever be absolute, is a minor matter altogether. One section maintains that we can reach it; another section thinks that we can only approximate to it; but they all maintain alike that it is the ideal condition to work towards, and that the more near we get to it, the more advanced is our civilisation. That is the principle, and it is in every case the same. Proudhon differed from Louis Blanc only as to the best means of applying it. Mr. Bright differs from Proudhon only as to the degree to which he thinks its application possible, or in the consistency with which he wishes to apply it.

Should the reader be inclined to doubt this, let him think for a moment on the methods of English Radicals whenever they seek directly to gain the adherence of the people. They come forward as the champions of social justice, and their avowed mission is to reform abuses. This being so, their first and principal task is to place these abuses in the most odious light



possible, and to rouse, as much as possible, the people's passion against them. Now, how do they do this? Always in one way. They represent whatever abuse may be at the time in question, not as a direct wrong done to their hearers personally, but rather as an insult to general social justice. Let us take, for instance, the case of perpetual pensions or else a grant to some member of the royal family. No Radical orator, denouncing these at a meeting, pretends that the sums in question, if divided amongst the nation, would yield to his own audience so much as a farthing a head annually; or that any one is appreciably injured by the application of them which he denounces. His argumentative tactics are of a very different kind. His understood end is, of course, the good of his hearers; but he does not suggest to them this end directly. He does not try to make them discontented with their own poverty, but to make them indignant with other people's riches; and the virtual question that he always first addresses to them is not, Why

should you have so little? but, Why should others have so much? This fact appears even more plainly in the Radical method of attacking the landed aristocracy. Nearly always the first point dwelt on with regard to this class is not the evil that its existence does the community, but the exceptional position that it itself occupies. It is decried because it is enviable rather than because it is injurious. A quaint example of this is to be found in the following argument, which is exceedingly popular with contemporary Radical writers. The owners, it is said, of four-fifths of the soil of England could be gathered together in a single assembly room, and be addressed easily by the voice of a single speaker.¹ Now this may be no doubt true, but for what reason is it dwelt upon? The mere fact that an aristocracy could stand in a single room need in

¹ Mr. Arthur Arnold dwells much on this fact in his volume on *Free Land*. It forms also the one subject of two recent volumes, which are specially addressed to the people, entitled *Our Old Nobility*; and the present writer, not long since, saw it placarded as a startling truth in the shop windows of nearly all the Radical pamphlet-sellers at Leeds.

itself be fraught with no more evil to the community, than the fact that a monarch could sit in a single chair, or than the fact—equally true—that the inhabitants of the whole world could stand on the Isle of Wight. Its sole significance from the Radical point of view depends on the striking way in which it exhibits a social inequality. It is designed to inform the masses, not how near they are to misery, but how far they are from splendour; and its immediate tendency is to excite the wish in them not to raise themselves, but to humble others. Now the Radicals, according to their own principles, are perfectly right when they argue in this way. If social equality really be the chief condition of happiness, it may most legitimately be put forward as the immediate end to be struggled for. Nor would there be any force in the objection that this was merely an appeal to envy; for if, as I say, the doctrine of equality be true, we must consider envy to be as sound a guide in politics as reverence by religious men is considered to be in religion. Just as one is

jealousy for the honour of God, so the other is jealousy for the general welfare of man. I have merely reminded the reader how the English Radicals argue, not to show that they are inconsistent with their own principles, but that their fundamental principle is identical with that of all other Democrats. There, every member of the professed party of progress meets the rest in unanimity. The German socialist in his prison, the Parisian communist in his exile, the English Radical Minister by his trout-stream or in his conservatory, each bases his opinions on the same fundamental principle, that the perfection of society involves social equality, and that the more near we get to it, the more advanced is our civilisation.

This principle, however, though the key to the common creed of democracy, is by no means the only principle agreed to by all Democrats ; nor for practical purposes is it even the most important. Its importance depends entirely on another principle implied in it, which though from the outset we have

presumed without stating it, it is now requisite to put in distinct form. It is this : Not only is inequality an imperfection in theory, but it is an imperfection remediable to such an extent in practice that the more marked forms of it, at all events, can be entirely done away with. The Democrats do not merely maintain, like curious social analysts, that the wealth of the few is a precipitate from the proper competence of the many ; but they assert also, as vigorous men of action, it is a kind of hoard which has been mechanically got together, and which could readily and with advantage be put back again in the quarters from which it was taken. Were this not the case, they would be nothing but a set of sentimentalists bewailing the injustice of life, just as other men might bewail the shortness of it. They might sigh, but they would not agitate ; nor would a practical man find any point to discuss with them. Unless they maintained that social equality *can* be, to discuss whether it *ought* to be would be a mere discussion in the clouds ; or, more properly speaking, there

would be no discussion at all. The most bigoted aristocrat would not be an aristocrat in Utopia ; indeed, if the imagination were to be the only thing that guided him, he would advocate equality no less than the wildest socialist. He would raise all his citizens to the highest possible level. Perhaps, too, he would give them all wings and wishing-caps ; or, better still, he might make them angels instead of men. We are not concerned, however, with any such dreams as these ; we are concerned only with realities, actual or potential. Taking the earth and its inhabitants as they have been hitherto, or as they may possibly come to be, is social equality an end we can practically work towards, so as ever for a permanence to be appreciably more near to it ; and if more near to it, to be any better off than we are ? The Democrats declare that it is. Here at last we touch upon solid ground. We have no abstract question as to what ought to be ; we have a direct proposition as to what is, and as to what will be. We have a proposition which can be proved to be either false or true,

or, at all events, shown to have some foundation or none. Now of one thing with regard to it we may at once be certain. It is not a generalisation from any order of events, either happening now, or that ever have happened formerly; for the Democrats themselves admit that the equality they wish to produce has never yet coexisted with the civilisation they wish to preserve. It must, therefore, be a deduction from a certain further generalisation, and what this is, it is not hard to discover. The Democrats, in declaring the change in question to be possible, tell us also the kind of means by which we are to accomplish it. These are familiar to all of us; and it will be enough to name a few of them—nationalisation of the land, a graduated income-tax, abolition of rank, a normal day of labour, compulsory State education, and, above all, universal suffrage, which will enable the people to pass what laws they please. In other words, the means for producing equality are a series of changes in existing social institutions. Now what is implied in this? There is evidently

implied in it the following general doctrine, that by changing the institutions of a society, we are able to change its structure; and this again resolves itself into the more general doctrine still, that the structure of society depends on its institutions. That is to say, if we put it a little more fully: The broad distinction between rich and poor, privileged and unprivileged, rulers and ruled, producers and non-producers, which has characterised every civilisation that has hitherto existed in the world, depends for its maintenance on those laws and forms of government, which in any given case are, no doubt, its immediate sanction. Here we have the exact generalisation we were looking for. The former proposition as to the possibility of producing equality is nothing more or less than a deduction from this. The reasoning runs thus: Laws and forms of government represent some deliberate human purpose; this purpose hitherto has been that of the few only, and it has been directed by them only to securing their own advantage. It is therefore argued that the many, if they

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will but combine, can reverse this state of things, and give effect to their own purpose instead—that is to say, the advantage of the many. They can establish new forms of government, and make new laws; and just as the old institutions produced inequality, so will the new ones produce equality. Put more briefly, this amounts to the following syllogism: The structure of society depends on its institutions; we can change its institutions; therefore we can change its structure. Accordingly, that the structure of society depends on its institutions, we may call the major premiss of the modern democratic syllogism; and with its truth or falsehood, the conclusion stands or falls.

We have thus pushed the matter a step farther back; but we have not even yet come to anything that can be compared immediately with facts. For this premiss itself, no more than the conclusion drawn from it, is a generalisation from what is or ever has been. It is confessedly a statement as to a sequence of cause and effect of which the world of

fact has as yet offered no example. Using the word *structure* in the sense we are now giving it, the structure of all civilised societies has hitherto been the same. It has been essentially that which exists in Europe now. There has always at one extreme been wealth and honour, and at the other obscurity and comparative indigence. In some cases the inequality may have caricatured itself, as in the case of the Asiatic despotisms; in others it may have disguised itself, as in the case of the Italian or Greek republics. But it has always been present wherever civilisation has been present; and though it may have changed its form, as it did during the great French Revolution, yet not even then did it change more than that. It simply reappeared as another species of feudalism, which Louis Blanc said '*was even worse than the old.*' In a word, many as have been the changes made in the institutions of various countries, none of these changes have changed the social structure.¹ Accordingly, whether or

¹ When we speak of institutions in this connection, and of the possibility of a change in the democratic sense being made

no the latter really does depend on the former, it has never shown its dependence in any overt fact of history. It will, of course, be said that the changes made hitherto in institutions have not been of the right kind ; but this only illustrates what I say more strongly. It at once shows us that, however the democratic premiss has been arrived at, it has not been arrived at from a study of anything that has actually happened, nor has it ever even been verified by a single comparison with it. It is plain, however, that, in its character of a scientific doctrine, it must have been arrived at from a study of facts somehow—indirectly, if not directly ; and since it is not a generalisation from such

in them, we do not mean a change that will alter their minor details, but we mean a change that will invert their general tendency ; and any reforms that fail to touch this are, from our present point of view, not changes at all. They are, on the contrary, conservative, not progressive ; and instead of tending to abolish inequalities, they tend rather to prevent the masses from resenting them. The action, for instance, of trades unions is regarded by extreme Democrats as treacherous to the popular cause ; and though higher wages have been secured, by their means, to the workmen, the result of this, it is said, is only to make them content with their chains.

facts itself, it must be a deduction from some other doctrine, that either is, or is supposed to be. What doctrine, then, is this? and what order of facts does it refer to? Here, again, is a problem which it is not very hard to answer.

I have observed already that the equality of modern democracy is essentially a material equality—an equal sharing in the fruits of existing material civilisation, or, in other words, of the world's existing wealth. It is plain, therefore, that the democratic premiss is essentially some proposition about wealth. It is a proposition, in fact, about the cause of the distribution of it, and it declares this to be laws and forms of government. Now, one thing is plain. Whether or no laws and forms of government are the cause of the distribution of wealth, they are certainly not the cause of the production of it. The democratic premiss, therefore, is virtually a statement that the cause of the production of wealth is distinct from, and independent of, the cause of the distribution of it. This necessarily

presupposes some doctrine already arrived at, as to what the cause of production is ; and that doctrine must be the generalisation from which the democratic premiss is deduced. Now that doctrine we arrive at in two ways ; not only from the logical necessities of the case, but from the explicit and formal statements of the democratic thinkers themselves. It is the doctrine so often proclaimed, and so little understood or examined, that the cause of all wealth is labour. Thus the Gotha Programme of the German Labour Party—an acknowledged epitome of the most serious democratic thought on the Continent—begins with the following sentence :—‘ *Labour is the source of all wealth and all culture ; and as productive labour generally is only possible through society, hence the aggregate product of labour belongs to all the members of society, each member having a right to an equal share, in accordance with his reasonable wants, and each sharing equally the universal duty of work.*’ And precisely the same principles, though stated in a less formal way, are at the root also of our

modern English Radicalism. Mr. Bright, for instance, in addressing an audience of working men, introduced, amidst loud cheers, the following significant sentences:—‘*Just now,*’ he said, ‘*as I was on my way to this place to speak to you, I watched in the street a magnificent carriage pass me; and in that carriage were two splendidly-dressed ladies. Who made that carriage?—You did. Who made those splendid dresses?—You did. Have your wives any such carriages to drive in? Do your wives ever wear clothes of that kind? I watched that carriage farther, and I saw where it stopped. It stopped before a stately house, with an imposing portico. Who built that house?—You did. Do you and your wives live in any such houses as that?*’

Further, that this doctrine should be the foundation of the democratic theory is not merely a matter of history; but it is, as I say, a matter of logical necessity also. The theory implies the doctrine, and could support itself on no other; as we shall see readily if we reflect what the theory is. The theory is that we can re-distribute the existing wealth of

the world, and yet not diminish the amount of it; or, in plainer language, that if we can take from the wealthy the excessive wealth which they now consume annually, and divide it amongst the poor, there will still annually be the same wealth produced. Now, this plainly can be true on one supposition only, that the wealthy classes, *as such*, are connected with wealth in no other way but as the accidental appropriators of it; and that in its actual production they have no part whatever: otherwise, to eliminate them would be to diminish production.

The validity, therefore, of the whole democratic theory depends on the scientific value of this doctrine of wealth and labour. Now here we have a doctrine at last which brings us face to face with facts. We have a proposition as to what is and has been—what happens every day, and can every day be seen to happen; not a deduction from this, as to what can happen, but has never happened yet. Wealth is being produced every day about us. The cause of its production is every day in

operation ; and the doctrine that its cause is labour is a statement, true or false, about a process taking place at this moment in the nearest mill or workshop ; and which, in the nearest mill or workshop, could be either disproved or verified.

This, then, is the point at which the democratic theory must be tested ; and here we shall begin, and indeed end, our examination of it. If labour really be the ultimate cause of wealth, then wealth can be distributed as the Democrats declare it can. Its distribution depends on laws and forms of government. The structure of society depends on its institutions : we can change the institutions, and we can, therefore, change the structure. In a word, the democratic theory is true, and the progress of democracy is irresistible. On the side of the Conservatives there is no more to be said, except pitifully to ask for a short reprieve.

On the other hand, if we find that the cause of wealth is something different from what the above doctrine states it to be, then all these

deductions fall utterly to the ground, and room will be left for a completely different set. This is the result to which I hope to conduct the reader. I propose, by appealing to the actual facts of life, to show that labour is not the ultimate cause of wealth, and that, apart from other causes, it would be utterly powerless to produce it; consequently, that the distribution of wealth which the democratic programme demands is a scientific impossibility, and that no laws could accomplish it; that the structure of society does not depend on its institutions, but that, on the contrary, the institutions depend on the structure; and that if material equality is ever to be secured at all, it will be secured only by the destruction of civilisation, not by any distribution of the finer existing fruits of it. In other words, I shall show that the principles of modern democracy or radicalism, being deduced, as they are, from an absolutely false generalisation, tend inevitably, in proportion as they are acted on, to increase the very evils which it is their avowed object to remedy; and that by fixing

the imagination of the masses on an impossible kind of progress, it is really directing them backwards towards a second barbarism, the horrors and privations of which are now hardly conceivable.

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For this purpose, let us turn once more to those sentences of Mr. Bright's, which were just now quoted. There, in a plain and highly popular way, labour is stated to be the cause of wealth; and certain forms of wealth are particularly specified, which, being intended to prove the statement, must at all events show its meaning. These are fine clothes, a fine carriage, and a fine house; and the relation of labour to these three productions is a type, for the Democrat, of its relation to wealth generally. What, then, did Mr. Bright mean to tell his workmen as to the relation of labour to a silk dress? He did not mean to tell them that it produced the silkworms; nor, in the case of the carriage, that it produced the wood or the leather; nor, in the case of the house, that it produced the stone or the marble. He did not mean to say, therefore, that it is the only cause of wealth; but simply that it is the only human cause. Of other causes there may be any number, such as soil, climate, geographical position, and the distribution of coal and minerals; and

the amount and quality of production may depend on these as much as it does on labour. The democratic doctrine, then, contains no denial of this: the Democrat, on the contrary, is quite ready to admit it. But he is content to leave the question in the hands of skilled economists; for it is not a question that touches his own argument. He urges no claim on behalf of inanimate nature; he is not a delegate from particular soils or climates, demanding for them a share in human wealth; therefore it is nothing to him how far they have helped to produce it. His only claim is on behalf of human beings; it is amongst them alone that human wealth can be divided; he does not ask, therefore, whether man has more to do with its production than nature; but whether one class of men has more to do with it than another class, or whether certain classes have anything to do with it at all. His whole attention is confined to this. Thus his doctrine of wealth and labour is to be taken with an important reservation. As to the part played by nature, it contains no statement

whatever. It does not mean that labour is the only cause of wealth: it means simply that it is the only human cause.

And now let us turn again to one of Mr. Bright's illustrations—the fine house, perhaps, will serve our purpose best—and let us examine the train of reflections that were plainly in Mr. Bright's mind with regard to it. 'See,' he said mentally, *'the pillared portico; see the stonework and the brickwork of the tall, imposing façade; look at each of these features, and let me ask, who made it? The answer is evident: stonecutters, bricklayers, masons. By a little inquiry we could find the names and addresses of all of them. Enter; and let us mark the coved ceiling in the drawing-room, with all its fretwork and gilding. That was not made by the idle lady sitting under it. She does not even know what material it is made of. It was made by dexterous workmen who themselves, perhaps, live in garrets. Again, that marble chimney-piece which is carved so beautifully—was it made by the young guardsman who is now leaning against it? It is as much as he can do,*

if he can cut a pig out of an orange. No; it was made by a stone-carver, who has never since seen his own handy-work. Yet again, that parquet floor—was it made by the young dandies who to-night are going to dance upon it? No; it was made by carpenters, who in their own rooms have barely a strip of carpet. Consider, then,' Mr. Bright would say, 'here is a typical abode of luxury; and yet of the only people who at present get any pleasure from it, not one has so much as a notion of the processes by which it was constructed. Plainly, then, those people have had no share in producing it. In so far as men have produced it, it is the product of labouring men—of their knowledge, their skill, and their muscular strength; and it is the product of these only. This is evident on the face of things, and requires no further proof.' Mr. Bright's meaning thus far it is easy enough to follow; but here there arises in it a very marked ambiguity. The above reflections are simple, and at least partially true; but what conclusion does he draw from them? The answer to this is two-fold. He—or we may


drop our allusion to him, and we may say the Democrats generally, draw two conclusions. They draw one as political agitators, the other as serious thinkers ; and between these two we must make a sharp distinction. As agitators, they argue in this way :—‘ *The luxurious house being the product of labour only, it might have existed just as well if its present mal-appropriators had never been in existence. The only difference in that case would be, that it would be enjoyed, and enjoyed justly, by the people whose labour made it. And as with the house, so with all the other luxuries that are now monopolised by the non-labouring classes ; if we extinguished those classes, their luxuries would be inherited by the labourers. There would be the same fine carriages, only with workmen’s wives driving in them ; the same fine dresses, only with workmen’s wives wearing them. Every bricklayer at night would come home to his own drawing-room ; and the London of the future would be a series of Belgrave Squares.*’ Now this is the wild doctrine which, in the heat of political agitation, the Democrats undoubtedly

do allow themselves to teach their ignorant hearers ; but they do so at such times only. So far from being part of their reasoned system, it is in reality not compatible with it ; and it is not a doctrine that they ever maintain seriously. Their dupes and their enemies, however, so widely suppose it to be such, that it will be well, in passing, to briefly point out its falsehood.

Continuing, then, to use the house as our type of wealth and luxury, let us ask why it is a type of luxury at all ? It clearly is not so because it consists of certain materials, and because on these materials have been spent certain skill and labour. The same materials, the same skill and labour, might have gone just as well to constructing a domed hovel without window or chimney, and supporting on its roof a colossal marble tea-pot. But this monstrosity would never be called a luxury ; nor would Mr. Bright taunt his working-men because their dwellings were not like it. The fine house, then, is a type of luxury, not from the fact of its having been produced by so

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much labour, but from the fact of this labour having been used in a certain way. We have supposed, for instance, that it has an imposing façade. That façade is composed of certain materials, which have been put together by the labour of masons and bricklayers. But the labour of these men is not the cause of it as a façade ; it is the cause of it only as a brick structure of some sort. *As a façade*, its immediate cause is the architect. So, too, with all the rest of the house, in so far as it is luxurious, the architect is the cause of its luxury. It is due to him that the rooms are arranged conveniently, that they are properly warmed, properly lighted, properly proportioned—in a word, that they are luxurious rooms, not unhealthy dungeons. We must, however, go a step farther yet. When we speak of the rooms being thus proper and convenient, we mean that they are proper and convenient for some special purpose ; and this purpose is to gratify the tastes and to fulfil the wants of the class of people who are to inhabit them—that is to say, the tastes and wants of the wealthy.



Thus if the wealthy classes never gave balls or dinner parties, there would be in our house no great reception-rooms. If they were not pleased with fine ceilings, fine gilding, and harmoniously coloured walls, there would be in our house none of these things either. But it is precisely these forms of magnificence that Mr. Bright, and thinkers of his order, always, when addressing the masses, take for types of wealth in general. If, therefore, they really mean what they seem to mean—if they really mean by wealth the existing luxuries and the existing splendours of the wealthy, then labour, so far from being by itself the cause of it, actually gives it none of its essential characteristics. Wealth, in this sense, is like a bronze statue, whose sole beauty is due to the mould it is cast in. The mould consists of the tastes and the habits of the wealthy; labour does nothing but melt and pour in the metal. Thus of wealth in this sense, the true cause must be the wealthy; since if it did not exist for them, it would not exist at all; whilst from the labourer's point of view, it can be

nothing but Dead Sea fruit, which would turn into dust the moment he laid hands on it. To hold it up to him, therefore, as a prize, which, as a labourer, he has any right to, or which, as a labourer, he could ever possibly possess, is simply to delude him for some ulterior purpose. So crude a fallacy can deceive no serious thinker ; and I mention it here not so much to combat it, as to show the reader that it does not need to be combated.


What the Democrats really maintain, and what alone it is worth while to examine seriously, is something very different from this. Not only do they fully recognise that but for the wealthy classes, wealth, as we have just used the word, would be never produced by labour ; but they add, further, that it ought never to be produced at all ; and it is a chief point in their argument that, were the wealthy classes extinguished, this production would cease. There would be no more palaces, no more grandiose staircases, no more suites of reception-rooms ; nor would there even be any humble imitations of these :



of wealth in such forms there would certainly be an end. Of something else, however, there would not be an end : and that is, of wealth in another form. The form would change, but the amount would remain the same. Wealth would undergo metamorphosis, but it would not undergo extinction. Thus, instead of one house, with twenty useless rooms in it, and each one of them five times too large for comfort, there would be a number of smaller houses, arranged upon different principles, but in their own way equally perfect. The labour that had once ministered to the pride of a single family, would here minister to the healthy pleasure of many : what had made one gallery splendid, would make fifty homes beautiful. And the same change would occur with regard to food, clothes, carpets, furniture, and all other productions, whether useful or ornamental. There would be no objects individually of fantastic or wasteful value, as is so often the case now. There would be no liqueurs worth fifteen shillings a bottle, no carpets worth three

guineas a yard, and no writing-tables worth five thousand pounds. But the skill and labour which is now so wrongly concentrated upon things like these would, without being in the least diminished, be applied in a juster way. Instead of producing a few invidious or enervating luxuries, it would produce many harmless and healthy ones, which to any sound taste would be even more pleasing than the former. Thus the wealth of the community, though minted as it were into smaller coins, would be still as great in the aggregate, or perhaps greater even than it ever was.

This is the conclusion really drawn by the Democrats from their doctrine of wealth and labour; and it is by the light of this that we must judge what that doctrine means. Now, on the very surface of it, it means plainly thus much—that the amount of skill and the amount of labour expended annually in any given community, are independent of the uses they are put to; and, though these last may vary, the former remain constant. This




proposition, however, can be put in a simpler form. It implies that men who do not labour are an unnatural and artificial class; and that a man naturally, whether his powers be large or small, will, unless hindered, develop and use them to the utmost. In other words, the doctrine of wealth and labour is really a statement with regard to human nature. It declares that man is naturally a labouring animal; that a human community is naturally a labouring community; and that out of so many men, unless there be some special hindrance, there will come naturally so much labour. That is to say, we may count on a man to labour, just as surely as we may count on a man to eat; and, although this tendency in him may be capable of some further explanation, it is capable of none that can affect the social speculator. For him it is an ultimate fact; and as such he builds upon it.

Here at least we find the thing we are looking for. Step by step we have examined the democratic theory; we have traced care-

fully backwards the logical pedigree of its doctrines; and we now arrive at the one from which they all spring. The conception of man as a naturally labouring animal, and of his tendency to labour as an ultimate social fact, is the logical foundation of every scheme or system that now emanates from the professed party of progress. The entire doctrine of equality, the entire democratic theory, stands or falls with the correctness of it. The inquiry, therefore, narrows itself to the single question: Is the above conception true or false? What is its relation to the actual facts of life?

Perhaps few democratic theorists, plainly as this conception is in their minds, and plainly as we have seen that all their arguments rest upon it, have ever stated it to themselves in the form of a definite proposition. One is almost forced to suppose this, because there is one fact which it is hard else to explain. It is hard to explain how else any set of men could ever have admitted, to say nothing of having reasoned from, a



fallacy so monstrous as this conception involves. The Democrats, however, are not alone in their ignorance. Other speculators upon kindred subjects have touched the same fallacy; and, though they have not reasoned from it, they have not seen or exposed it. To me few facts in the history of modern science are so startling as this singular oversight. Here is a fallacy of the most important kind imaginable, standing, as it were, in the middle of our busiest modern thinkers; but it stands there quietly, like a hider at hide-and-seek, whilst the seekers brush against its clothes, and yet never suspect its neighbourhood. The more I consider this, the more strange does it seem to me. If ever there was a fallacy which could not remain hidden, which, by its direct contradiction of the best-known truths of science, was certainly calculated to provoke its own detection, such a fallacy one might well have thought was this one. There is more yet to add. In a different form, and applied to different questions, it has not only been detected, but

denounced and exposed already. Indeed, modern psychology is little else but one long and crushing refutation of it. It has been driven, however, from one field of thought, only to disguise itself and re-appear in another. The lie which was yesterday sent naked out of doors by the psychologist, is to-day, in a new dress, the first truth of the social speculator. That this way of putting the case is not in the least exaggerated I shall now proceed to show.

Let us take, then, the doctrine we have been just now considering, and look at it in its psychological aspect. Man, it declares, is naturally a labouring animal; unless he is actually hindered, he will work according to his capacities, and whatever use we put his labour to, the labour will be still forthcoming; just as a river would still pour down its water independently of the kind of mills we built on it. In other words, the amount of labour done by a man is not caused by, and is independent of, his circumstances. But the circumstances of a man's life are an exact equivalent for his

motives. This doctrine, therefore, psychologically is neither more nor less than a statement that labour is a kind of action which is produced without motive. Motive may direct its application, but it does not cause its existence. The cause of that is to be sought elsewhere. It inheres in the human constitution just as thirst and hunger do ; and as little as these, has it any external origin. In a word, as has been said already, it is action uncaused by motive.

Now, were this doctrine propounded in any psychological treatise, its monstrous character would be seen in a single moment. But when it is connected with various concrete issues, when it is treated not as a psychological doctrine, but merely as an economic or a social one, then its fallacy seems to at once conceal itself. For this fact there must, of course, be some explanation. I conceive it to be as follows. The democratic theory, in the mind of every Democrat, is founded originally not upon thoughts, but images ; and thought is invoked afterwards, merely to analyse what

is already contained in these. Now the first image that every Democrat starts with, consists of two contrasted figures—the man who labours, and the man who does not labour ; and these he takes as types of the whole of human society. Hence there at once occurs to him the extremely obvious reflection that since plainly nobody can live without labour of some sort, the man who does not labour is supported by the man who does ; and further, that if the latter were to cease to support the former, the former immediately would begin to support himself. In the above simple image, and in these simple reflections on it, is to be traced the origin of the democratic doctrine of labour. Now, so far as they go, these reflections are true enough ; but the point to be noticed is, that they go only a little way. The Democrat's error lies in his failing to understand this. Consequently he expands them beyond their proper limits, and transmutes them in so doing into a grotesque and preposterous falsehood. Let us consider for a moment how much we can really draw

from them. In themselves they amount to this, that if no one else does any work for a man, he is certain, if he lives at all, to do some work for himself; and for the plain reason that he cannot live otherwise. Hence the Democrat at once jumps to the generalisation that man naturally, and unless artificial conditions hinder him, will always exert his faculties as a paid artisan does now. He will go on producing, no matter what, but something. This is what the Democrat means when he says that labour is the cause of wealth, and when he conceives of man as naturally a labouring animal.

But the original observation warrants no such conclusions. It shows us, no doubt, that man naturally will always do labour of some sort; but the amount of this labour is the very least conceivable. It is nothing more than will suffice for his own bare subsistence. That much we can always count upon his doing. But why? Because there are certain wants that we can always count upon his feeling. The only labour in short that we can say he will do naturally, is the exact counterpart

of the wants of which he cannot possibly divest himself. Whatever labour he may do beyond this, he does only in virtue of certain variable circumstances ; and until we know them, we can say nothing about the labour.

It will appear, however, from hence, that in a very limited sense labour may be spoken of as being practically natural to man, and his tendency to it accepted as an ultimate fact in his constitution. But it will appear further that if we are to use the word thus, labour emphatically is not the cause of wealth ; it is the cause, on the contrary, of nothing but a bare subsistence. If the Democrats in that sense like to use that formula, they may find it convenient as a kind of mental shorthand ; and if their hearers are duly warned that it is such, there is no reason why it should convey a wrong idea. In our present purpose, however, it would only prove confusing, and we must completely free ourselves from such ambiguous phraseology. It will be well for us to remember that, however certainly we can always count on a man for the minimum of

labour spoken of, yet even this really depends on external circumstances, and could not be produced unless these were present to motive it. Let us suppose, for instance, a hungry man in a prison, where there was no food to be acquired by any means, and where he knew there was none. In that case we should have the internal want, but we should certainly have no labour; and for this reason, that there would be no motive to labour. A motive is the product of two things, and the internal want is but one of them. The other is the external means by which it is thought this want can be satisfied; and if this last element is absent, labour is unproducible. If our starving prisoner thinks that there is in his cell somewhere food hidden behind some loose stones or brick work, he will tear his hands to pieces in trying to dislodge the masonry. But if the structure of his walls show such a hope to be impossible, he will not, except in madness, raise so much as a finger against a surface of ponderous granite. Labour under such circumstances, so far from being natural


to him, will be both impossible and unthinkable. Motive will be absent, and the man will be a helpless log. The tendency in man then to do a certain minimum of labour, which is practically, no doubt, an ultimate fact in his character, is, strictly speaking, not an ultimate fact at all; and to speak of it as if it were so, is merely a short way of saying not that this labour does not depend upon circumstances, but that the circumstances that produce it exist practically everywhere. In other words, man will always labour to feed himself, because in every spot he inhabits he can procure food by labouring.

And now let us gather up all the foregoing arguments and apply them finally to the great doctrine we are considering—the modern democratic doctrine—that the cause of wealth is labour. The result is this—that that doctrine which is so perpetually appealed to both in politics and speculation, which is paraded before the world as a new social evangel, as the first tidings of hope that have ever reached the multitudes, and which is stirring the minds

of men with divided hope and horror, is, when analysed accurately and resolved into its component propositions, a doctrine utterly at variance with every teaching of science, and the more evidently monstrous the more thoroughly it is understood. It is one of two things: it is either a direct contradiction of the actual facts of life, or else it is a statement that has no relation whatever to them. It is either a falsehood, or it is nonsense. If labour be spoken of with the understanding just alluded to, that man labours naturally only in so far as he has always some motives present to him, then the doctrine is not nonsense but it is a falsehood. For labour so qualified, as we have seen already, produces not wealth, but it produces the very antithesis of wealth, that is, only a bare subsistence. If, however, labour be spoken of, as it undoubtedly is spoken of by the Democrats, with the above understanding completely put aside and forgotten—if it be spoken of as in itself an original and constant cause, and if, as such, it be said to produce anything, then the doctrine is simply so much

nonsense. It is a contradiction of the very first truth of psychology—of a truth admitted by thinkers of every school, by necessitarians and by believers in freewill equally—the truth, namely, that action is the creature of motive ; and that even if the will be as free as it has been ever said to be, it can simply choose between motives, but never supply their place.

Here formally my destructive criticism ends, but it is not quite ended practically. We have gone to the root of the whole democratic theory ; we have found that to consist of a single scientific falsehood ; and to each of my arguments in succession the reader may no doubt have assented. But the falsehood in question, when put in its proper light, is at once seen to be so crude and palpable that in many minds there is sure to arise a doubt whether, after all, it can have really been taught by anybody ; whether the theory of modern democracy can be really based upon it, and whether all this while we have not been tilting at a windmill. Until this doubt



has been dispelled completely it is impossible to consider that the democratic position has been disposed of. I shall, therefore, ask the reader to consider the following fact.

Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his 'Study of Sociology,'¹ touches the very question we have been just discussing, namely, the origin of what the Democrat means by wealth; and of this he takes a very excellent example, the 'Walter Press,' by which the 'Times' is printed. And I say such a printing-press is a very excellent example, because it is a machine for producing not an aristocratic luxury, but one of the prime necessities of the ideal democratic life—a newspaper. Mr. Spencer, then, bids us consider the origin of the 'Walter Press.' Most men, he thinks, would have probably no notion of it; he therefore goes on to instruct us. '*In the first place,*' he says, '*this automatic printing machine is lineally descended from other automatic printing machines . . . each pre-supposing others that went before. . . And then, on tracing the more remote antecedents, we*

¹ *The Study of Sociology*, by Herbert Spencer, pp. 126-130.

find an ancestry of hand-printing presses which, through generations, had been successively improved.' This, however, says Mr. Spencer, is but a small part of the matter. He points out how the 'Walter Press' not only implies an ancestry of former presses, but how it implies the existence of the machinery used in making it, and how this again has a further ancestry of its own. Again, he reminds us that the 'Walter Press' would have been useless until there had been invented a paper-machine which would turn out paper in almost endless lengths. '*Thus,*' he says, '*there is the genesis of the paper-machine involved:*' and he finally adds to all this, the abundance of iron in England, which has been the chief cause of the development of our machine-making generally. Here, however, he pauses to tell us that we have not finished our inquiry even yet. To produce the 'Walter Press' there have been moral causes at work too. '*Without that readiness,*' he says, '*to sacrifice present ease to future benefit, which is implied by enterprise, there would never have arisen the machine in question. . .*

Without mechanical engineers, who fulfilled their contracts tolerably well by executing work accurately, neither this machine, nor the machines that made it, could have been produced; and without artisans having considerable conscientiousness, no master could insure accurate work. . . . So that there are implied in this mechanical achievement not only our slowly generated industrial state, with its innumerable products and processes, but also the slowly-moulded moral and intellectual natures of masters and workmen. Has,' Mr. Spencer proceeds, 'nothing now been forgotten? Yes, we have left out a whole division of all-important social phenomena—those which we group as progress of knowledge. . . . Without a considerably-developed geometry . . . without a developed physics . . . and in the absence of a developed chemistry . . . such a machine could not have come into existence. Surely,' he exclaims, 'we have now got to the end of the history. Not quite: there yet remains an essential factor. No one goes on year after year spending thousands of pounds and much time, and persevering through disappointment and anxiety, without a

strong motive. The "Walter Press" was not a mere tour de force. Why, then, was it produced? To meet an enormous demand with great promptness—to print with one machine 16,000 copies per hour.' Mr. Spencer amplifies this statement a little; and then he informs us that his explanation is at last complete. He has put all the causes before us as of a typical piece of wealth.

Now I shall ask the reader to consider this account attentively, and for the following reason. It is given us by a man who, of all living men, is perhaps most representative of modern scientific thought. There are few branches of science which he has not studied; there are few opinions with which he is not familiar; in especial he has analysed human nature and society: and this is his account of the most prominent of sociological facts—the production of material wealth. What, then, does the reader see in it? Perhaps the first thing that will strike him is its extreme amplitude and complexity, as contrasted with the crude formula that the cause of wealth is

labour. But such a contrast is altogether superficial. Has the reader not detected something more than that? I will show it to him. In that elaborate account of Mr. Herbert Spencer's, despite all the knowledge and all the keenness shown in it, there is implied tacitly the very same fallacy which I have shown to be the root of the democratic theory. In each of the causes that Mr. Spencer enunciates there is implied the existence not only of human labour, but human labour of the most various kinds. But all this labour Mr. Spencer takes for granted; and, though he tells us carefully how in each case it has been directed, it never once occurs to him to ask how it was generated. In other words, in this special connection, he conceives of labour as action that is independent of motive. He does not distinctly say this, he does not distinctly think it; but the conception is evidently at the back of his mind, and its dim presence is traceable in his whole handling of the subject. The reader may ask, however, How can this be? Does not Mr. Spencer

specially mention motive? Indeed, is it not the very thing that he leads up to and ends with? To this I answer that so far as the word goes, Mr. Spencer no doubt does not only mention motive, but he parades it; but the prominence he gives to the word merely shows how completely he has missed the thing. Let us see how this is. In the first place, then, out of all the countless actions which he shows have been involved in producing the 'Walter Press,' there are one man's actions, and one man's alone, which he thinks it necessary to refer to motive at all; and those are the actions of the inventor of the machine himself. The actions of all the inventors that had preceded him, of all the miners, the ironfounders, the chemists, the engineers, and so forth, are taken as matters of course that require no explanation. This omission, however, is a comparatively minor matter. It is a hint rather than a proof of the real error in question. The proof of that is, not that Mr. Spencer does not dwell upon motive enough, but that what he speaks of as motive

is not really motive at all. Let us consider this point carefully. The invention and completion, says Mr. Spencer, of the 'Walter Press,' involved much persevering labour on the part of a certain man—the inventor, and this man laboured in this way only in virtue of his being influenced by a certain motive to do so. Now, what does Mr. Spencer say that that motive was? It was the wish, he says, to print 'The Times' at the rate of 16,000 copies an hour; or, as he puts it afterwards, the wish to supply the public demand for such copies. Mr. Spencer, however, here is confusing two things. He is confusing the motive of an action with the purpose of it. The purpose of an action is its objective end, the motive of it is its subjective end. The one is the cause of a man's acting in a particular way, the other is the cause of a man's acting at all; and though these two causes may occasionally coincide, yet essentially they are always distinct, and generally they are completely different. Thus in producing the 'Walter Press,' the wish to supply the public

demand spoken of did no doubt constitute the inventor's purpose ; but it did not constitute his motive. His motive was not in this wish, but in the reason of his having this wish. Now, that reason, it is just conceivable, may have been a wholly unselfish desire on his part that whoever wanted 'The Times' should be able to procure a copy of it, and his motive and his purpose accidentally would in that case coincide. But none the less for that reason would his motive have been distinct from his purpose ; nor could it possibly be expressed in terms of it. The only way to express it would be in terms of his own character—that is to say, the intense and loving solicitude with which the general public had inspired him. We shall not, however, I think, be doing the inventor an injustice if we refuse to credit him with a state of feeling so singular, and if we attribute to him as his motive, instead, the desire to make money ; if we say that whilst his purpose was to give something to the public, his motive was to get something out of it.

Anyhow, whether his motive was this, or whatever it was, it was something which Mr. Spencer does not even so much as hint at: it was an internal tendency to action developed in him by external circumstances; and it was an exact resultant of these last and of his own character. Nor does this hold good of the inventor only. It holds good equally of all those countless others, without whose labours, as Mr. Spencer says, the 'Walter Press' would have been impossible. Without motive not one of those could have moved a muscle: they might as well have been inmates of the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. And motive in each case—in the case of every collier who handles his pickaxe, of every stoker who fires his engine, of every chemist who lifts his crucible—has been the exact resultant of the man's character and of his circumstances, of the wants he is capable of feeling, and of the means he finds open to him of satisfying them. Here, then, we have the one final cause, not merely of human labour, but even of human movement; and yet of this

cause Mr. Spencer says nothing. Though he may know it as a psychologist, yet he has utterly forgotten it as a sociologist. In this latter character it has never even come into his considerations. What is to be said then? The very thing I have said already—that that same democratic fallacy which, when once exposed, it seemed difficult to attribute to any intelligent being, still more to conceive of as the basis of an accepted system, is actually to be found in the reasonings of the very man who, of all others, would be the first, if he detected its presence, to realise and to denounce its enormity. Since, then, the reader sees with his own eyes that such a thinker as Mr. Spencer can be guilty of it, he will find it less hard to bring the truth home to himself that Mr. Bright may be guilty of it also; and that for one man like Mr. Bright who may have the vigour to teach it, there may be eager millions ready to receive and reason from it.

Finally, to clench the foregoing arguments, and to make the practical import of them

more vivid still, there remains to be added one thing. In place of the fundamental fallacy of the pseudo-science of the Democrat, we must put the fundamental truth that in a true social science will correspond to it. The pseudo-science starts with the conception of man as an animal, containing in himself a natural tendency to labour. The true science does just the opposite. It starts with the conception of man as an animal, containing in himself no tendencies whatsoever, and exhibiting them only when acted on by external circumstances. Abstracted from these circumstances, it regards him as hardly animate. It might, perhaps, allow that he would have as much life as a vegetable; he would be conscious of this life also: but so far as power to perform a single action goes, he would be practically dead. He could neither raise an arm, turn his head, nor move a step backwards or forwards. He would be motionless, for he would have no motive. If ever we would arrive at a true scientific knowledge of the human cause of wealth and the progress of


material civilisation, we must start with the conception of man as thus abstracted from his circumstances. We must strip him of every attribute by which we know him as a working creature. We must regard him as on a par with a cabbage or a blade of asparagus, and as incapable as these of making the least exertion. Even this hardly symbolises sufficiently his utter and absolute deadness. Let us conjure up to ourselves the face and the figure of Napoleon ; let us think of the energies that, wherever he went, he manifested ; and let us ask why these energies never left him ? It was because, wherever he went, he was surrounded by external circumstances. Abstract him from these, and the same breathing body becomes as helpless and inactive as a dead cod's head in a gutter, or a wax doll in a toy-shop. Take, however, this lifeless lump, and place it once more in its own circle of circumstance. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, a host of motives is generated ; the dead thing is alive again. It is '*in form and motion, how express and admirable ! in action,*

how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a God!' Since, then, apart from circumstances man can have no motive, and since apart from motive he has practically no faculties, since he is as incapable of labour as a doll or a dead fish, labour in itself is no more the cause of wealth than Shakespeare's pen was the cause of his writing 'Hamlet.' The cause is in the motives, of which labour is the outward index. Moreover, motive itself being the resultant of two things—a man's internal character and his external circumstances—the cause of wealth is finally to be sought for in these; nor will the conditions of its production ever be understood until in some way or other it is systematically connected with both of them. It is that connection which I say has never yet been perceived; and it is that connection which the missing science will show us.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MISSING SUBSTITUTE.

WE have now done with fallacies ; we are beginning our search for truth ; and the first of these truths we have arrived at and laid down already—namely, that all labour is caused by and must be referred to motive, and that motive is the resultant of a man's character and his circumstances. This proposition is, of course, little more than a truism. The Democrats deny it only by an unintentional implication ; and when once it is plainly stated, they would admit it as much as anybody. It, then, so far as it goes, we start with as proved and settled. Before, however, we can make any positive use of it, we must put it in a fuller and far more accurate form. We must not be content with saying that motive is the cause of labour ; we



must add that this causal relationship is of a kind so intimate, that each special manifestation of labour has its special corresponding motive, and that every difference in the one has its corresponding difference in the other ; so that wherever there are various manifestations of labour there must also, to produce them, be a corresponding variety of motives.

When, however, the proposition is put into this form, it at once ceases to be a truism ; and for this reason. It may have any one out of several distinct meanings ; and though all will admit that one of these meanings must be true, it is impossible offhand to decide which. Whatever decision is made, we shall need proof to guide us in it. First, then, let us see what these alternative meanings are. The cause of their existence is in the composite nature of motive, and we can understand them only by carefully considering that. We have said already that motive is the resultant of circumstances and character ; but it is requisite now to make our language exacter. We must reflect now that when we

speak of a man's character we mean not one but two sets of qualities. We not only include in it goodness and badness, selfishness and unselfishness, kindness and cruelty; but we include in it also wisdom and folly, quickness and stupidity, and perhaps even such things as physical endurance and dexterity. In other words, a man's character divides into his desires on the one hand and his capacities on the other; and between these two we must draw a marked distinction. We must, accordingly, in our revised analysis of motive, say that it is the resultant not of two but of three things—of a man's circumstances, of a man's desires, and of a man's capacities.¹

Let us take, for example, a chemist, who, at a high salary, superintends some process in

¹ Though I have already touched on the following fact in passing, it will not be amiss to notice it once more here. The above statement, with regard to action as the result of circumstances, contains no contradiction of the doctrine of free-will. The reader, therefore, who for theological or other reasons, is pledged to that doctrine, need regard it with no suspicion. Whether the will be free or no, motive is equally a *sine quâ non* of action. Free-will only operates in the choice of motives offered to it. It is like a player at whist, doing its best with the hand dealt it. It cannot change its cards; still less can it play without them.

a factory ; and let us analyse his motive for doing this exact work. In the first place it is evident that to do it he must have the special capacity for doing it, else he would do not it but some other work. In the second place, the greater his capacity the less likely would he be to do mere routine work for its own sake ; he must do it, therefore, because he desires to earn his salary. In the third place, it is evident that were this salary not forthcoming, the mere desire to earn it would have no practical effect upon him ; therefore the external circumstances under which, as a fact, he does earn it, are absolutely necessary to make the desire operative, and the operation of the desire is necessary to make him exert his capacities.

Let us now suppose that in the same factory our chemist has a brother who is nothing higher than a cinder-sifter, and let us analyse this brother's motive for doing his work also. Just the same facts confront us. To do his work he must evidently have some capacity for doing it ; he

could not do it if he had no arms, or were a lunatic. It is evident, also, that he does not do it for its own sake—that is to say, from a sentimental love of cinder-sifting; he does it, therefore, because he desires to earn his wages, and this desire is only operative through the circumstances that enable him to get them. From either of these men take any one of these three things—the capacity, the desire for money, or the circumstances under which money can be gained, and his motive disappears and his labour becomes impossible: whilst if, keeping all of them, we simply change the first, we shall have a motive still; but it will be a different one, and it will produce some different labour. We have not, however, put the whole of the case yet. The labour of the chemist and the labour of the cinder-sifter are different kinds of labour as it is. Therefore, as it is, there must somewhere be a corresponding difference in their motives. The question is, where does this difference lie?—in their capacities, in their desires, or in their circumstances? or

does it lie more or less in all of these? Does it lie in the fact that one is cleverer than the other, that one is more ambitious than the other, or that one is better paid than the other? Or does it lie in the fact that he is all of these things at once?

This, then, is the point that we now have to elucidate. When we say that wherever there are various manifestations of labour, there must to produce them be a corresponding variety of motives, we must explain exactly in motive what elements we are declaring variable.

Let us go back to our chemist and our cinder-sifter, whose labours may stand as types of the varieties of labour generally. They have been born of the same parents, they have been brought up together, and their lives in early childhood must have been at least approximately similar. The present difference in their functions has been only developed gradually. What has been the cause of it? Let us go through the various suppositions that are possible. It is possible, then, that the chemist and the cinder-sifter may

have begun life both with equal capacities, and have seen equally that by developing them they would increase the money value of their labour; but the cinder-sifter may have been so idle, that the trouble of self-development has more than counterbalanced his desire for higher wages; he is therefore fitted only for the simplest form of labour, and has to rest content with what wages he can get for it. Secondly, it is possible that both brothers may have been equally industrious, and equally resolved to make their labour valuable; but they may not both of them have had equal capacities; and though each has done his best yet the overt results are different. Both tried to be chemists, but only one has succeeded. Thus the difference of motive, corresponding to the difference in their labours, would in the first case be a difference in their desires, in the second a difference in their capacities; and in both a difference in external circumstances; for in both cases we have presumed this fact, that the rate of payment differs with the kind of labour. Finally we may suppose

a third case ; we may suppose that the rate of payment is constant. The cinder-sifter is paid as much as the chemist ; the chemist is paid no more than the cinder-sifter. Both, however, let us remember, are paid something ; for without that neither would labour at all. In this case, then, external circumstances are still as much as ever an element in both motives ; but they cease any longer to be an element in their difference. The difference lies wholly in the two men's characters. The chemist is a chemist simply because he likes chemistry, and has had the perseverance and talent to become a proficient in the science. The cinder-sifter is a cinder-sifter for no other reason than that he prefers or is fitted for no higher employment, and he therefore accepts the simplest that the occasion offers him.

Now, if we regard our pair of brothers as individuals, not as types, the difference in their labour might be accounted for on any one of these three suppositions. It is evident that it might be on either of the two first ; it is also possible that it might be upon the third. A

pair of brothers, that is, may quite possibly have existed, of whom one, though he gained not an extra shilling by his exertions, may, from instinctive love of science, have laboriously made himself a chemist, and have been willing to give his skilled labour to a manufacturer for wages no higher than those of the unskilled cinder-sifter. But we are not now dealing with exceptional cases, and if this last case be exceptional it has nothing to do with us. The pair of brothers for us have been types, not individuals. They have represented the general rule, and emphatically not any exception to it. The question, therefore, if we regard them thus as typical, is not what might be the analysis of their respective motives, but what, as a matter of fact, is; and this is a question that can be answered in one way only—not by imagining what is possible, but by observing what is actual; by a wide observation of men's lives as they are and have been.

Having now shown, therefore, the alternative ways in which, as the cause of various labour, motive conceivably *might* vary, let us go

on to inquire in which of these, we must say that actually, as a general rule, it *does*. I shall state our conclusion first, we will consider its proofs afterwards. When it is said, then, that whenever there are various manifestations of labour, there must be also a corresponding variety of motives, what it is meant to say with regard to motive is this : In the first place there is a variety always in the capacities of the men motived, and in the second place there then is a variety usually in their desires also. These two propositions, however, it is hardly worth insisting on ; they are involved in any view of the case, and will be denied by nobody. The proposition to be proved and defended refers to the third element, that of external circumstances, and upon it, and it alone, does the real discussion hinge. This proposition is, that unless in the case of each different labour, the external circumstances of the labourers were different also, the two other differences would be practically non-existent ; the difference in their desires would be inoperative, that in their capacities would be undeveloped.

In other words, various as are men's desires and capacities naturally, yet if there were no corresponding variety in the external good things that can be gained by men—if talent and ambition commanded no larger share of these than a minimum which rewarded the lowest idleness and stupidity, all men practically would be equally idle and stupid, and their natural differences might as well have been non-existent. A Columbus in that case would do no more than a common cabin-boy, and if we cared to glance again at the pair of brothers we were speaking of, we might find both of them cinder-sifters, but we should not find either of them a chemist. The world, in fact, would be a living graveyard of mute inglorious Miltons, and of Cromwells who had done nothing for their country.

Let me put this in a way more formally logical. We speak of a man being born with great natural capacities; but before these capacities can have any effect upon the work he does, the man himself must take the trouble to develop them. Now, to do this is never an

easy task, and it is open to the man to perform it, thoroughly, partially, or not at all. A man's natural capacities are therefore the limit, not of how little he will be able to do, but of how much. They merely prevent him exceeding a certain limit ; they do not in the least prevent his falling short of it. Within limits, then, his capacities practically are just so much as he has himself chosen to make them. Now, upon what does his choice in this matter depend ? It depends on his desire to gain some external advantages ; and this desire, in its turn, depends for its force to move him on the fact that these advantages could be gained by his self-development, and gained more or less completely in proportion to its completeness ; whilst without this self-development they could not be gained at all. Our set of propositions will accordingly stand as follows : Men's capacities are practically unequal, simply because they develop their own potential inequalities ; they only develop their potential inequalities because they desire to place themselves in unequal external cir-

cumstances ; and this desire has this effect on them only because the condition of society is such that the unequal circumstances are attainable.

Thus, in the various motives that correspond to various labours, all the three elements which compose a motive are variable. That the two first are so, however, is a fact, as we have seen already, which in itself no one doubts ; we may therefore presume, without restating it. All we want to insist on is that part of the proposition, which at present we cannot presume—about which people at present do doubt, and which still has to be proved to them ; and having now seen what that part is, we may state the doctrine which I propose to prove, in this form. Those personal inequalities, which are admitted on all hands to be involved in the difference between the motives of different labours, are themselves creatures of unequal external circumstances, and for practical purposes would have no existence without them. Inequality, therefore, in external circumstances, or social in-

equality, which is simply the same thing, is the ultimate cause, not indeed of the lowest form of labour, for we shall have that in any case, but of every form of it which rises above the lowest.

In stating this proposition I do not conceive for a moment that it contains anything itself that will commend it to our acceptance. Unlike certain others, it does not need only to be stated for our common sense at once to perceive the truth of it. It is no more in harmony with any apparent fitness of things than the proposition that milk boils at a higher temperature than water, or that bismuth melts at a lower temperature than lead. On the contrary, if it provoke any immediate judgment at all, it is far more likely to be thought false than true ; for there are, as a fact, a number of counter-arguments, which at a hasty glance are certain to seem fatal to it. Its truth can be established only by an appeal to external facts, and by comparing it with them, not with our own reflections. Hastily, by fits and starts, without any system, or per-

ception that there can be a system, such a comparison has often been made already ; but no one has ever made it as a special and separate study, or has ever distinguished clearly the order of facts involved in it. This is the reason why, as I have said already, there are endless opinions on the matter, but absolutely no knowledge ; why on the side of the Democrats there is nothing but a false science, and on the side of the Conservatives no science at all. By a true method of inquiry all this might be changed ; and it is this method which I venture to trust I may now be the means of initiating.

CHAPTER V.

THE SCIENCE OF HUMAN CHARACTER.

WE are here at last on the threshold of the missing science ; and we need not now look far to distinguish its scope and subject-matter. The general proposition we are invoking its aid to establish asserts a permanent relationship to exist between two things—human character and social inequality. Now this inequality, whatever its first origin (that is a question we shall touch upon by-and-by), in its present development not only acts upon human character, but is itself produced by this very thing it acts upon, just as a fire may be fed by the hands which it keeps from freezing. Our proposition therefore primarily is a proposition about human character ; and if we state it (which we do) as a general and a permanent truth, and declare that we can prove it by

strict scientific methods, we must mean that human character can be made the subject of a science. We must mean that, in spite of all its countless varieties, it yet presents to us certain phenomena so uniform, that it will be possible to state them as laws of human nature, and to reason from them afterwards as fixed and established principles. This in fact is precisely what I do mean. The missing science is a science of human character.

This statement, however, will never explain itself. To convey to the reader a true conception of my meaning, we require a far fuller and far more minute description of it, and that for two reasons. Compared with the sciences that are now recognised as existing, the science I speak of is closely allied to several; and yet at the same time it is wholly distinct from any. It is like a bull's-eye in a target, which has marks of ball all round it; which by one or two balls has been even grazed perhaps; but which never by any chance has been hit full. We have therefore, with regard to it, to prove two oppo-

site things, first that it *can* exist, and secondly that it *does not* exist—first that its possibility is not a dream, secondly that its existence is not yet a reality.

Such being the case, our best way of approaching it will be by reference to those writers who have already come most near to it. These are Buckle and Mr. Herbert Spencer. Let us turn first to the former.

The science Buckle sought to establish he called the Science of History, and it was to have for its aim, as he himself expressed it, the discovery of ‘*the principles which govern the character and the destiny of nations.*’ That such a science is at least conceivably possible, must, he argued, be plain to everyone who assents to the following propositions :—‘*That when we perform an action, we perform it in consequence of some motive or motives ; that those motives are the result of some antecedents ; and that therefore if we are acquainted with the whole of the antecedents and with all the laws of their movements, we could with unerring certainty predict the whole of their immediate*

results. If we believe thus much, he said, we must see that the science is a possible thing conceivably; and if we will only realise what materials there are ready for us, we shall see also that it is a possible thing practically. The materials in question he discusses at great length, and they are many in kind and number; but there is one class upon which he dwells especially, and which alone, he says, gives the others their scientific significance. This is the class of material supplied to us by statistics. Statistics, he points out, afford a new kind of evidence; and they have put us in possession of a new order of facts. They show us something, he says, which we might else have dreamt about, but could never have hoped to prove—the sameness of human conduct when under the same circumstances; and they thus at once supply us with one general truth to begin upon. He illustrates this in a number of curious ways, which reveal the sameness spoken of, in even the smallest matters. Thus there is a startling regularity every year in the number of letters

posted without any direction. Marriages and murders recur in the same way ; so does the proportion between male and female births. But the fact he dwells on as most striking of all, and which he regards as explaining and proving his point most clearly, is this same regularity when found in the case of suicide. ‘ *Among public and registered crimes,*’ he writes, ‘ *there is none which seems so completely dependent on the individual as suicide. . . . It may therefore very naturally be thought impracticable to refer it to general principles, or to detect anything like regularity in an offence which is so eccentric, so solitary, so impossible to control by legislation, and which the most vigilant police can do nothing to diminish. . . . These being the peculiarities of this singular crime, it is surely an astonishing fact that all the evidence we possess respecting it points to one great conclusion. . . . that suicide is merely the product of the general condition of society. . . . In a given state of society, a given number of persons must put an end to their own life. This is the general law ; and the special question as to who*

shall commit the crime, depends, of course, upon special laws ; which, however, in their larger action, must obey the larger social law to which they are all subordinate.' Buckle then formally applies this statement not to crimes only, but to all human actions. By a similar train of evidence he declares we can prove all of them to be simply '*part,*' as he puts it, '*of one vast scheme of universal order*'; and to be '*determined, not by the temper and wishes of individuals, but by large general facts over which individuals can exercise no authority.*'

Such was the first great inference, and such was the method of observation, on which Buckle sought to base the study of the science of history. Now, the chief point to notice is the nature of this method, and the scientific principle which he expressly declares to be involved in it. The principle is that no fact or event of any kind can be understood by studying a single instance of its occurrence. '*Everything,*' he writes, '*that we at present know has been ascertained by studying phenomena, from which all casual*

disturbances having been removed, the law remains a conspicuous residue. And this can only be done by observations so numerous as to eliminate the disturbances, or else by experiments so delicate as to isolate the phenomena. One of these conditions is essential to all inductive science.' But it is plain, he says, that when a man performs any action—for instance, when he marries—we can neither isolate his feelings nor make the required number of observations on them. Hence, says Buckle, the true cause of a marriage is never to be sought for in the '*temper and wishes*' of the bridegroom, for these are things we cannot treat scientifically; but it is to be sought for instead in certain '*large general facts*' which we can.

Such is the outline of the argument in Buckle's opening chapters, and not only is it full of just and ingenious reasoning, but it is a luminous exposition of the only true method to be followed in the inquiry spoken of. We encounter, however, one singular omission, and that is in the materials to which he says this method is to be applied.

Let us return to the passage in which he

speaks of suicide. Seemingly, he says, there is no act ever performed by man which is '*so completely dependent on the individual*' who performs it. But that is only *seeming*; what it is really dependant on is '*the general condition of society*:' consequently the facts in the case, which the man of science must study, are not facts in the lives of individual suicides, but the number of such men in recurring periods, and the relation of this number to the general conditions in question. Let us attend, however, to the following obvious considerations. It may be quite true—indeed we may say it certainly is true—that between the particular act and the general social conditions there does exist the strict relation which he says there does. But if this be so, why is it? The relation exists in virtue of a chain of events or facts, the last link in which is the private character of the individual. Buckle himself lays it down as the very foundation of his science, that '*when we perform an action, we perform it in consequence of some motive.*' Indeed, in the special case of suicide he elaborately

expands the statement. He points out at length what a complex internal process on the part of the agent is involved in the commission of the act, what a nice balancing of motive, what a conflict of thought and passion. This being the case, were the agent's character different, it stands to reason that his act would be different also. Even if we were to go no further, he must be a sentient human being; no social conditions could cause the suicide of a wooden Highlander in a snuff-shop. It is quite plain, however, that we can go much further than this. Given a bold man instead of a timid one, a sanguine man instead of a phlegmatic one, and we might see resulting from the very same social conditions, not suicide, but a fresh start in life. Action, then, is so inseparable from the character of the agent—and Buckle himself would be the first to admit this—that the latter may be looked on simply as the reverse side of the former. When, therefore, it is maintained that every human action is really the effect of general

social circumstances, we must not say only that the circumstances are the cause of the action, but that they are the cause also of the character of which that action is the resultant; and when it is said that the regularity of action is simply a reflex of the regularity of circumstances, we must mean that there is a constant and uniform relationship between circumstances and the development of character. But this is possible only on one obvious supposition, that there is a uniformity in the development of human character itself; and that however it varies, it varies according to law, just as surely as the circumstances which are the cause of its variation.

Let us take, for instance, the case of a vast mob of enthusiasts, inspired like one man, with a single purpose, such as taking the Bastille, we will say, or destroying the Hyde Park railings. Now it is plain that no member of either of the mobs in question could completely explain his part in it, by any personal confessions of his own. Events

and circumstances are involved in each case, which may be traced out by the historian, but which are invisible and unknown to the actors. But there are two points to remember. A mob collects and acts, Buckle tells us, owing to certain remote causes outside the lives of its members, and in obedience to some general law. We may freely admit that. But in the first place, be the law never so general, and the causes never so remote, the law exists, and the effect follows the causes, only in virtue of each mob being a man of certain character. In a mob of twenty thousand men there are twenty thousand characters, twenty thousand sets of motives working; and the conduct of the mob is the exact resultant of these. We are accustomed, it is true, to ignore this fact in language. We speak of a mob as though it were really a single animal. We say that it got excited, that it was appeased, or that it did this or that. But we speak thus for the sake of convenience only. What we mean is, that twenty thousand men got excited at the same moment and by the same thing, or that

they were appeased at the same moment, or by the same thing, or that they did this or that in concert. Now here comes the grand point to remember. No two men in this crowd have had exactly the same histories, or have exactly the same characters; and the character therefore is different of each of our twenty thousand mobsmen. In spite, however, of all these differences, we have, on the occasion we speak of, complete unanimity of action. To what then can this be due? It must be due to the fact that our supposed twenty thousand characters have, in spite of their differences, certain points of agreement; and it is only through these that their common action is possible. Let us consider the point further. Of all these thousands of men, each has his own separate temperament, his own separate interests. The passions that direct him as a mobsman may be quite dormant in private life; and any two of the number under ordinary circumstances might seem contrasted rather than similar characters; they might indeed be so. But when they all act together for some common

purpose, all these countless differences, for a given hour or two, have disappeared; they have cancelled out, as it were, and left nothing but the points of agreement, and the mob virtually has become a single organism, whose strength and weakness is as some multiple of its parts.

Here then are the exact conditions required for scientific observation. The field in this special case, no doubt, is very limited; for one special mob, however numerous it may be, represents but a small section of the human race at large. None the less it affords us a clear and complete example of how certain facts of character are susceptible of scientific observation. It exhibits to us the action not of any character in particular, but of the character that is common to thousands of men generally, and that alone connects their actions with some common social cause. And thus the conditions that Buckle demands are fulfilled: ‘*all casual disturbances have been eliminated,*’ and ‘*the law remains a conspicuous residue*’; or at least the facts remain out of which a law might be formulated.

This is the point, however, that Buckle has failed to notice. He was so busy in exposing a falsehood, that he entirely overlooked the truth which ought to have replaced it. His contention, as we have seen, was that when dealing with biographical details, such as a man's conscious emotions on any given occasion, we can neither '*isolate the phenomena*' nor '*eliminate the casual disturbances*'; and we therefore cannot rise to any scientific generalisation. And this is of course true: there can be no science of any single character. But if there is one thing that Buckle's argument proves, and that his whole position requires, it is that though there can be no science of any character in particular, there can be a science of the human character in general.

I now pass from Buckle to Mr. Herbert Spencer, whose arguments still more directly point to the same conclusion, and who yet fails equally to draw that conclusion himself. In the volume I have already quoted from, *The Study of Sociology*, just as Buckle contended there could be a science of history, so Mr.

Spencer contends that there can be a science of society ; and the result of its study will be, he says, to show us '*what is desirable, what is practicable, what is utopian,*' with regard to social progress. The following extracts will serve to explain his meaning. '*That the properties of the units,*' he writes, '*determine the properties of the whole they make up, evidently holds of societies, as of other things . . . Ignoring for a moment the special traits of races and individuals, observe the traits common to members of the species at large ; and consider how these must affect their relations when associated. They have all need for food. . . . To all of them exertion is a physiological exercise. . . . They are all of them liable to bodily injury. . . . and to continual pains of positive and negative kinds,*' and so on. It is plain then, he argues (I proceed with his own words), '*that from these individual qualities must result certain qualities in an assemblage of individuals . . . and these assemblages will differ in their characters in proportion as the component individuals of the one differ from those of the other.*' Now

all this, says Mr. Spencer, '*is almost a truism,*' and he lays it down as something we may at once start with accepting. Such being the case, he continues, '*it cannot be denied that in every community there is a group of phenomena growing naturally out of the phenomena presented by its members—a set of properties in the aggregate determined by the sets of properties in the units; and thus the relation of the two sets forms the subject matter of a science.*'¹

Now hence it might seem that we were about at once to be led up to the very science I am myself speaking of. It might seem that Mr. Spencer had covered the ground already. And when we consider a few of the illustrations by which he supports the above position, we shall hardly be able to doubt that such is indeed the case. '*If,*' he writes, '*in crossing a street, a man sees a carriage coming upon him, you may safely assert that in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand he will get out of the way. If, being pressed to catch a train, he knows that by one route it is a mile to*

¹ *Study of Sociology*, pp. 51, 52.

*the station, and by another two miles, you may conclude with considerable confidence that he will take the one-mile route.'*¹ Further, he reminds us how it is implied in all repressive legislation, '*that the desire to avoid punishment will so act on the average man as to produce an average foreseen result.*' Similarly, he continues, it must be held '*that on the average of men the desire to get the greatest return for labour, the desire to rise into a higher rank of life, the desire to gain applause, and so forth, will each of them produce an average result also.*' And he finally concludes by saying, '*that to hold all this is to hold that there can be prevision of social phenomena, and therefore social science.*'

Surely one might think nothing could be more clear than this. The science described thus must not only, like Buckle's, point to a science of character, but it can be nothing more or less than the science of character itself. Such would be naturally our conclusion from the extracts above quoted; but

¹ *Study of Sociology*, p. 38.

if we follow Mr. Spencer further we shall see that it would be a wholly wrong one. The science of character he does indeed touch upon; but he does this as though he hardly knew what he was doing. Though he touches it he does not grasp it; though he sees it he does not recognise it. Never wholly out of contact with it, he is yet always sliding off it as though it were an inclined surface. Not once does he fasten on it, as the real centre of the question; and he practically misses it quite as much as Buckle did.

Let us see how this is. He begins his proof that some science of action is possible by citing certain cases in which action is plainly uniform; and the generalisations with regard to these which he gives as specimens, one at first conceives he is offering us as fragments of that science itself. Of such an impression, however, he very quickly disabuses us. The generalisations of that science, when once he really brings us to them, are found to deal with facts of a wholly different order. Of these too he gives us certain specimens

in advance, and they at once show thus much clearly to us. '*To make more definite,*' he writes, '*the conception of a social science, let me set down a few of the truths indicated. . . . Their aim is simply to convey a clear idea of the nature of sociological truths. Take first,*' then, says Mr. Spencer, '*the general fact, that along with social aggregation there always goes some kind of organisation. . . . The evolution of a governmental structure, having some strength and permanence, is the condition under which alone any considerable growth of a society can take place.*' This is his first specimen. Let us now pass to his second. '*Along with the evolution of societies in size, there goes evolution of their co-ordinating centres; which having become permanent, presently become more or less complex.*' Here, again, is his third. '*Men rise into a state of social aggregation, only on condition that they relapse into relations of inequality in respect of power, and are made to co-operate as a whole only by the agency of a structure enforcing obedience.*'¹

¹ *Study of Sociology*, p. 60.

Such then is the class of generalisations to which the social science, as conceived by Mr. Spencer, is to lead us; and they show us at once that, whatever that science may be, it is not the science of character. They do, however, something far more than this. They show *us*, though they do not show Mr. Spencer, that very science of character which he does *not* recognise, standing like a ghost by the side of the science which he *does*, and displaying its difference all the more clearly by its nearness. Let me put my meaning more plainly. These generalisations we have just quoted of Mr. Spencer's, all deal with the actions, not of units, but of aggregates. So likewise does his whole social science. It is a set of inductions as to the actions of men in masses, and it deals with these actions solely as related to each other, or else to the conditions supplied by external nature. Now the very first truth that Mr. Spencer in this connection insists upon, is that the action of men in masses depends for its uniformity on the character of the individuals that compose

such masses. Between these two factors, he says, there is a constant and a necessary relation. This relation, however, he treats in a very singular way. He treats it as a fact to be recognised, not as a fact to be explained; and having shown that it exists, as he does with great force and clearness, he feels free to draw his conclusions from it, without examining it further. In the following passage he tells us as much, quite plainly. ‘*Thus recognising,*’ he writes, ‘*these relations between the phenomena of individual human nature and the phenomena of incorporated human nature, we cannot fail to see that the phenomena of incorporated human nature form the subject-matter of a science.*’¹ There is the whole case. What he wants to make us realise is, not the nature of the relation between these two orders of phenomena, but merely the result of it in producing regularity in the second of them. His whole scientific attention confines itself to these last. From incorporated human nature he never reasons back to individual

¹ *Study of Sociology*, p. 59.

human nature ; nor connects his generalisations as to the one with corresponding generalisations as to the other. Thus, having told us that '*men rise into a state of social aggregation only on condition that they lapse into relations of inequality in respect of power*,' he adds that '*this is a primary common trait in social aggregates, derived from a common trait in their units*.'¹ But this is all he says. How it is derived, why it is derived, what that common trait in the units is, he does not even dream of inquiring. And yet if the trait in the aggregates be capable of scientific statement, that in the units must be equally capable also. For every generalisation we can make about a mass there must be some corresponding generalisation we can make about a man. This, however, Mr. Spencer altogether overlooks. There is another instance which will make the case yet clearer. One of the chief present obstacles, he says, to a conception of the social science, is the pre-existence of what he calls '*The Great-Man Theory*,' or the theory according to

¹ *Study of Sociology*, p. 60.

which ‘*the history of what man has accomplished in this world is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here.*’¹ This, he says, is the theory of the benighted childhood of all of us ; but the moment science examines it, ‘*it breaks down completely ;*’ and he goes on to tell us exactly why it breaks down. ‘*If it be a fact,*’ he writes, ‘*that the great man may modify his nation in its structure and its actions, it is also a fact that there must have been those antecedent modifications constituting national progress before he could be evolved. Before he can re-make his society, his society must make him. So that all those changes of which he is the proximate initiator have their chief cause in the generations he descended from. If there is to be anything like a real explanation of these changes, it must be sought in that aggregate of conditions out of which both he and they have arisen.*’ Verbally, Mr. Spencer’s sentence ends there ; but virtually it contains this further concluding clause :—‘It must be sought in the aggregate of conditions, and not in the

¹ *Study of Sociology*, p. 30.

biographical details of the great man's life.¹ These last, he has declared a few moments before, are fit for nothing but to tickle an appetite '*not very remotely allied to that of a village gossip.*' Now here we have Buckle's exact error repeated. Because of the events of which a great man is the proximate initiator his biography can supply us with no complete explanation, therefore, Mr. Spencer argues, it can supply us with no necessary part of such. This must be sought solely in that '*aggregate of conditions*' he refers to. Surely here is an astounding mode of reasoning. These two sets of causes seem to him to be mutually exclusive; he utterly fails

¹ *Study of Sociology*, p. 35. It may be worth the reader's while, as a philosophical curiosity, to examine the passage in Mr. Spencer's volume from which this extract has been made. He will find, if he reads the whole of it, that Mr. Spencer is confusedly combatting two popular ideas at once. He is maintaining that it is idle to study the biographies of great men; *firstly*, because they do not really cause the great events they seem to cause—they are mere puppets in the hands of other causes behind them; and *secondly*, because the events they seem to cause are in reality not very great after all. It is interesting to note the absurdities in which he involves himself when stating this last reason; and also its complete inconsistency with the first.

to see that they are in reality complementary. He asks us, as an instance, to consider the case of Cæsar. '*Cæsar*,' he writes, '*could never have made his conquests without disciplined troops, inheriting their prestige and tactics and organisation from the Romans who went before them.*' But he says nothing of the equally obvious fact that the troops would never have made conquests either, unless they had had a Cæsar to command them. Whatever aggregates of conditions Cæsar's conquests were caused by, these aggregates of conditions were obliged to operate through Cæsar. True, Mr. Spencer will say, but the fact is unimportant, for it was these very conditions that produced Cæsar himself.

Now let Mr. Spencer pause, and reflect for a moment on what he means by that. The conditions in question, he means, are distinct from Cæsar. Cæsar, before he was born, no doubt, was in them ; he was in their womb, as it were. He was being shaped and fashioned without any consciousness of his own. But as soon as he saw light he became a separate

being. What, then, had the aggregate of conditions done for him thus far? They had simply sent him into the world a baby, with immense capacities indeed, but capacities undeveloped, and which under certain circumstances might have never been developed at all. What developed them so as to make him the Cæsar of history? Mr. Spencer will again say, the aggregate of conditions surrounding him. But does Mr. Spencer not see that we have now two factors in the case—the one the aggregate of conditions, and the other the conscious Cæsar himself; and that these acted on Cæsar in the way they did, only through those motives of which his personal life is the record? And does he not see that if the events of which Cæsar was the ‘proximate initiator’ were thus really the result of forces which Cæsar did no more than transmit, he could have transmitted these last only because these motives we speak of had been developed and had operated according to certain laws? Finally, does not Mr. Spencer see that though we can never discover these

laws by observing their manifestation in Cæsar's character only, yet none the less do these laws exist, and that by studying other characters which have played similar parts to Cæsar's, they are at least conceivably ascertainable, and susceptible of scientific statement? Surely one might have thought that, with Mr. Spencer's own arguments for guides, this conclusion would be obvious to even the meanest capacity. But what does Mr. Spencer say? He says that we should discover no such laws whatever, even should '*we read ourselves blind,*' as he puts it, '*over the biographies of all the great rulers on record, down to Frederick the Greedy, and Napoleon the Treacherous.*'

Let us for a moment hold him to his own examples. It is true that being unversed in the language of philosophic history, I am not certain who Frederick the Greedy and Napoleon the Treacherous are; we will suppose, however, that the latter is the late French Emperor. Now let Mr. Spencer compare the late French Emperor with Cæsar, and merely note in these two lives the part played by ambition—how it

was developed, and the class of actions caused by it. Even these two lives will suggest, if they do not prove, to him, that ambition is produced under certain uniform conditions, and affects action in a certain uniform way; whilst if he extends his observations from these two lives to those recorded in the other biographies which he ridicules, he will find the foregoing suggestion transformed into a scientific certainty. He will in fact be brought back to a truth that he has himself already insisted on, namely, that '*The desire to rise into a higher rank of life has an average effect upon the average man:*' only now this truth will have taken an accurate form for him. He will know how the desire is caused, and what the effects are; and instead of merely seeing that there is plainly some uniformity in them, he will be able to recognise what this uniformity is. In other words, he will be able to change his first statement, which is '*not remotely allied to that of a village gossip,*' into an accurate statement becoming a scientific philosopher. Let him do this and a new light

will dawn on him. He will see that biographical details, however seemingly trifling, depend for their value on the way in which we look at them ; and that he has hitherto thought them fit but for village gossips, only because he has looked at them in the village gossip's way.

Thus far, however, this has altogether escaped him. He has studied social phenomena as though they were an intricate train of clock-work. He has observed the first wheel and he has observed the last ; and he has discovered that the movements of these two are connected ; but he has left out of sight the whole intervening machinery, to whose regular action he admits that the connection which he studies must be due : that is to say, he omits the Science of Character. The mere fact, however, that Mr. Spencer omits it is not my point here. All I want to make evident is that, although he omits it, yet his entire system is one long proof of its possibility, and that its scope is defined by the outlines of the gap which its absence causes. If there be such a

thing as a social science, if there be such a thing as a science of history, there must be such a thing as a science of biography also—or a science, in other words, of the character of the human unit. Buckle shows this; Mr. Spencer shows this; and though they both of them show it altogether unintentionally, it is for immediate practical purposes the most valuable thing they do show.

I shall now follow Mr. Spencer's example, and illustrate the science by a few specimens of its generalisations. To the first of these Mr. Spencer himself shall help us. '*If,*' he has said, '*in crossing a street, a man sees a carriage coming upon him, you may safely assert that in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, he will get out of the way.*' Now there at once we have a certain general statement, either applied to or derived from a number of biographical details. It is not, however, as it stands a generalisation of the science of character; but it is merely a step towards, or else a deduction from, one; and taken by itself it is wholly without signifi-

cance. The real generalisation it depends upon is something very different. It is that every man so strongly desires to preserve his life, that when it is threatened by circumstances, he will always act to preserve it. *There is a genuine truth belonging to the science of character. It is very simple, and it is all the better for its simplicity. Let us consider its nature carefully. First, then, its subject matter is not the action of aggregates; its subject-matter is the action of the single unit. It can instantly be connected with a corresponding truth in the aggregate; but it is an explanation of that connection; it is not in itself a statement of it. In itself it is a statement about the unit. Next let us consider its degree of certainty and universality. In the form we have just given it, it has been made to apply to every man. Every man, it was said, desires to preserve his life. That, however, can only be roughly true. Some men commit suicide, some court death in battle, and some suffer it for their friends: nor can we be certain in the case of any individual that he will not some*

day do one of these things himself. Our proposition as it stands, therefore, is not true universally; and the moment we apply it, we are at once aware that it expresses not a certainty but only a very strong probability. If we would make it certain, we must put it in a different form. We must not say that, whenever a man's life is threatened, the desire to live will always make him act to preserve it; but we must say instead that whenever a man does act to preserve it, the cause of his action is always the desire to live.

Now I will ask the reader to consider this point well, for it is not peculiar to the truth we are now touching on, but it is an essential characteristic of all the truths of the science. Those truths are all of them propositions, like this one, with regard to action as related to motive in the individual; and they all, like this one, can be put into two forms. They can either begin with the motive, and thence proceed to the action; or they can begin with the action, and thence go back to the motive. That, however, in itself is not the important



point. The important point is that, in the former case, we have simply statements of probabilities—sometimes strong, often extremely weak; and that, in the second case, we have statements of virtual certainties. In other words, the study of the science of character will not enable us, except as a probability, to say that any given man possesses a given motive; or, supposing him to possess it now, that he will continue to possess it for the future. It cannot show us this of even the motive of self-preservation. Therefore it cannot show us, except as a probability, how any special man will, as a fact, act in the future. If, however, on the other hand, any special action be given us, it can show us, as a certainty, that it was produced by a special motive; and conversely that, if the special motive is wanting, the special action is sure to be wanting also. This holds good throughout the whole science of character.

The importance of this fact will appear presently. Let us pass first to another example of it, which I shall take from what

many will think a very unlikely place—the works of a well-known novelist. ‘*Emotion*,’ says George Eliot, ‘*is obstinately irrational: it absolutely refuses to adopt the quantitative view of human anguish, and to admit that thirteen happy lives are a set-off against twelve miserable lives, which leaves a clear balance on the side of satisfaction.*’ Now, of all the countless readers who have thought these words true, not one perhaps has recognised them as a hard scientific generalisation. Yet such they are; and, if they be true at all, the truth they embody belongs to a science of character as much as the formulæ of a chemist belong to the science of chemistry, and would be as much in place in a scientific educational handbook. Let the reader reflect and see if this be not so. George Eliot asserts a fact with respect to human emotion. That is evident: but with respect to the human emotion of whom? Not the emotion of John, or Jack, or Mary—of any particular persons, or of any particular group of persons—but the emotion of men generally. Her assertion

either refers to that, or else it refers to nothing. It is, therefore, a scientific generalisation. Let us take another example; it shall be from La Bruyère: '*Love may lead to ambition, but ambition will never return to love.*' That may be true, or it may not be true; but if it be true, in other words, if it be not nonsense, it is a scientific generalisation also, and it belongs also to the same science of character. Let us take yet another: this one shall be from Shakespeare:—

*Trifles light as air
Are to the jealous confirmations strong.*¹

The same criticism plainly applies to that. It is a general scientific truth, or it is not a truth at all.² Now, about these statements there is this point to consider. All three, we have said, are statements of general truths;

¹ It may be perhaps worth while to notice that this law of jealousy is partly referable to some other more general law relative to the influence of fear and desire upon belief.


² The reader may compare with the above remarks the following words of Buckle: 'The most accurate investigators of the human mind hitherto have been the poets, particularly Homer and Shakespeare.'

but general in what way? The subject of each is affection in one form or another; and in each it is implied, no doubt, that affection is a common feeling. That is to say, each states by implication that, given a man at hazard, he will probably be susceptible of the kind of affection spoken of. But, at least in the case of the love that leads to ambition, this probability is only of a very faint kind; nor even in the two other cases does it nearly approach a certainty. George Eliot does not say that everybody feels emotion; La Bruyère does not say that everybody falls in love; Shakespeare does not say that everybody is made jealous. The generality of the statements does not lie there. As general statements they mean nothing more than this: that, given the emotion, given the love, and given the jealousy, emotion, love, and jealousy will act in certain uniform ways.

And now I must cite finally one example more. It is already not strange to us. All productive labour that rises above the lowest is always motivated by the desire for social

inequality. This is the proposition to which I have been slowly re-conducting the reader ; and I have used the others solely to throw light upon this.

Now I have made no attempt as yet to prove this proposition true : it still confronts us utterly unsupported. My sole aim hitherto has been, before proving it to be a truth, to explain the kind of truth that I propose to prove it to be. Firstly, it is a truth belonging to an inductive science, and it embodies, as such, not opinions as to particulars, but knowledge as to a permanent principle ; and, secondly, whilst this knowledge cannot be applied to the present, so strictly as to enable us to predict a man's future actions, it will enable us, suppose a given action predicted, to state as a certainty that a certain cause must produce it. Given the action, it will enable us to reason back to the motive ; and given the absence of the motive, to deny the possibility of the action. In other words, it will afford us no certainty that a hundred years hence there will be any ~~skilled~~ labour at all in the world ; but it will



afford us a certainty that if there be any skilled labour, the desire for social inequality will have been the motive that produced it, and that social inequalities will be existing to make the desire operative.


CHAPTER VI.

HUMAN CHARACTER AND THE DESIRE FOR
INEQUALITY.

HAVING thus shown what it is I propose to prove, let us now address ourselves to the proof of it. First, however, let me make it clear to the reader what the proof must consist of, for which he will have to look. The proposition to be proved is not like a proposition of Euclid. It cannot be neatly deduced in a brief syllogism from any foregone first principles. We cannot prove it in *barbara*, or *celarent*, or *bocardo*. The proposition is an induction—a generalisation from an immense number of facts ; and it can be proved only by so referring to these, that the reader shall recognise at once the reality and the force of them. Now in different inductive sciences, this reference has to be made in different ways. In some, the facts are altogether new to the

public. They are made known for the first time by some man of science; and they have to be accepted at first solely on the evidence of his word. Such, for instance, are many of the facts brought forward by Mr. Darwin. But in other cases the facts, in a loose and general way, are for the most part quite familiar; and then the task of proof consists principally in reminding the reader of things he knows already, in leading him to consider them accurately, and to classify them; and thus, not so much adding to his existing stock of knowledge, as forcing him to put it into shape. This is the form of proof we shall have to look for now.

My first step, then, will be to anticipate certain objections, which are sure at starting to bewilder the reader's mind, and to indispose it for a calm view of the question. It is sure to be said that the proposition before us attributes all civilisation to the meanest of human vices; and that it is a piece of cynicism almost too crude to be criticised. Does the desire for inequality give the painter



his eye for colour? Does it give the chemist or the astronomer his diligence and his interest in discovery? Has man no finer tastes? Has he no nobler aspirations? And is the exercise of skill in itself not a pleasure and a motive to him? Then again, has he no kindly feelings? And in civilisation, has no part been played by philanthropy? All this will be said, and more to the same effect, which the reader may supply as his feelings or thoughts dictate to him.

Now in all this is implied a profound truth. It is a truth that may be expressed in many general forms, one of the most significant being that of the well-worn text, '*Man does not live by bread alone*;' and if any cynic denies it, he must be silly as well as cynical. It is, however, not to the point here; it forms no objection to the proposition now to be examined by us. It is, on the contrary, quite compatible with it, as we shall see at once if we examine the matter accurately.

First then let us consider this. The proposition in its scope is strictly limited. It

does not say that all human activity is motivated by the desire for inequality: it says so only of all productive labour, except the lowest. Of other forms of activity it says absolutely nothing. It does not, for instance, say that a man eats because he desires inequality, or that he goes to the play because he desires inequality. That, however, is so evident, that it hardly requires to be noted; and it does not answer what is in the objector's mind. The objector is thinking, not of actions like these, which affect nobody but the agent. He is thinking of actions that affect society at large, and which either raise or lower the quality of a civilisation; and amongst these he is perfectly right to recognise many with, other motives than the desire for inequality. He commits, however, two mistakes with regard to them. He mistakes the nature of their importance; and he exaggerates their number. The latter, indeed, he probably thinks indefinite. Let me correct him in that point first.


Of all actions which affect society generally,

there are four classes only, independent of the desire for inequality. These are artistic creation, scientific discovery, corporal works of mercy, and the propagation of religion.¹ This list is exhaustive. Now of these four classes of actions, the last evidently has nothing to do with productive labour at all; for our present purpose, therefore, we may at once set it aside. Next, with regard to corporal works of mercy, their aim is the distribution of the products of labour, not production itself; it is the decrease of want, not the increase of wealth; and for our present purpose we may set them aside also. All we need deal with are the two first—artistic creation and scientific discovery. Between these and productive labour there is, no doubt, a real connection. The point is, of what kind?

Let us begin with artistic creation. A

¹ To this list might be added the activity of the statesman, or the politician; but hitherto this has been so evidently associated with a desire for inequality in rank, that it has not seemed right to include it. If there are any cases of which this cannot be said, they may be classed together with actions motivated by the philanthropic impulse.

picture, or a statue, or, we may add, a work of literature, is in itself an actual piece of wealth ; and it is a piece of wealth producible without a desire for inequality. Any of these things may be produced for the mere pleasure of producing them ; and when they are so produced, then I fully admit we have a genuine exception to the proposition I am seeking to establish. It is, however, the one single exception, and its importance is far less than it seems to be. In the first place works of art, in any case, form but a very small part of the results of productive labour : and, in the second place, though the artistic impulse is at times the only motive for their production, and is always concerned in it, yet this, as a fact, is by no means what happens generally. Generally there goes along with the artistic impulse a desire for inequality, if not in money, yet in fame—very often in both—and beyond a doubt the finest art in the world has been that produced under this added stimulus. The Greek tragedians wrote for applause, and public prizes ; Shakespeare



wrote in order to gain a living; Scott wrote in order to build Abbotsford; Rubens and Turner painted both for fame and fortune. Thus, if we consider artistic creation on the whole, though it affords theoretically a genuine exception to my proposition, yet it is morally rather a confirmation of it.

Of scientific discovery we must speak in a different way. The motive here is generally of a far purer kind. Indeed, of all classes of labour, with the exception of the labour of the missionary, that involved in this is apparently the least self-interested.

*A watcher of the skies,
When some new planet swims into his ken.*

may be well supposed to find in that moment a reward sufficient to account for his pains in arriving at it; and most sciences would yield us similar illustrations. There is another fact that throws yet more light on the matter. Men of science, as a rule, neither seek nor make fortunes. Neither the flowers of fashion nor the fruits of rank are offered to them. They neither shine, nor aspire to shine, in the

arena of social life; indeed, a *savant*, to many people, seems but another word for a recluse. *Plain living and high thinking* has been, as a rule, their real as well as their nominal motto; and the career and the position that is most common amongst them seems a conclusive proof as to the motive of their special activity. It is the love of truth for its own sake; it is not the desire for inequality.

Now, granting all this to the full, what will be its bearing on our view of productive labour? Productive labour, for many of its extraordinary advances, depends, as we all know, upon pure scientific discovery. Let us give that fact its full weight and significance; but, having done so, let us proceed to observe this. Pure scientific discovery in itself is not productive labour. It is, on the contrary, wholly unconnected with it; it is not even in the region where such labour operates. The truths arrived at by it, as apprehended by the mere seekers for truth, are like powerful spirits, secluded in a distant

star ; and so far as they affect manufactures or manufacturing processes, they might just as well have never been discovered at all. Before they can be applied to these practical purposes, they have to be mastered by a new class of men altogether, who value them not for themselves, but solely for the uses they can be put to. Before, then, the truths of science can be connected with productive labour, they must pass out of the hands of those who originally discovered them ; and they must be made over to men who, whatever may be their motives in acquiring them, have some motive evidently beyond the scientific impulse. Indeed, this might really be shown by a much briefer argument. In so far as a man of science pursues scientific truth for its own sake, he does not pursue it for the sake of applying it to manufactures ; and in so far as he does not apply it to manufactures, he is himself unconnected with the operations of productive labour.

Accordingly, though we may grant the utmost that could be urged by any objector

—though we may grant that scientific discovery is one of the chief agents in progress, and that it is yet not motivated by any desire for inequality, its case is no disproof of my proposition about productive labour. Indeed, if we may proceed to one or two farther reflections, it will be found to be morally a confirmation of it, equally with the case of art.

What I mean is this. In spite of the modest life characteristic of the scientific student, in spite of the absence in it of struggle for place or wealth—or perhaps more properly I might say because of this absence—we can clearly detect marks in it, as on a white sheet of paper, of a tendency in proportion as exceptional power is felt not only to use this power, but to claim a position corresponding to it. In the first place, then, it can hardly be doubted that every scientific discoverer when on the traces of a great truth, feels not only anxious that this truth should be discovered, but that he, out of all others, should be the person who discovered it. This anxiety, however, would be not worth mentioning if

its object were merely an inward sense of achievement ; but it can be seen to be more than that, by a very simple observation. Let a man of science who has made some great discovery have this discovery claimed for an inferior and later rival, and his indignation will afford a singular revelation to us. He will feel, and he will feel very rightly, that he has been defrauded of an honour that was due to him ; and though he may not have thought of it until he discovers it to be withheld, the value he has unconsciously put on it will be revealed to us by his anger at its loss. We see the same thing, too, under a slightly different aspect, in the love that men of science form for their own opinions ; in the marked acerbity with which they often repel attacks on them ; and still more in the praise they command from every one when frankly, and with a good grace, they acknowledge themselves in error. If a man, in the pursuit of any particular truth, was really motivated by nothing but the desire that this truth should be discovered, he would care as little whether

he were himself thought to have discovered it, as whether he or the link-man were thought to have discovered the hansom that he was anxiously waiting for to take him home from a party; and he would be as little disinclined to withdraw from and acknowledge an error, as he would be to withdraw from a house if he had by chance entered the wrong one.

It will thus be seen that, even with the scientific impulse, a desire for inequality of some sort can hardly fail to associate itself. But we must not end here. The same thing, though in a more modified way, may be said of the religious and the philanthropic impulse also. Often, it cannot be doubted, and in more cases than we shall ever be able to number, both these impulses do their work singly, and singly produce lives of continued labour and sacrifice. But such is the constitution of the human character that the desire for inequality is not far off even here. The most devoted labourers in the cause of religion have many of them notoriously yielded to it, and all

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man's being recognised for what he really is, and since he is greater than other men, being acknowledged by other men to be so, then the desire for inequality need be a slur neither on the artist nor the philosopher ; nor in asserting its presence do we, in the smallest degree, derogate from the power and spontaneity of the artistic or scientific impulses. Rather, indeed, do we the contrary. We attribute to these impulses a sign of strength, not of weakness. If we take a wide survey of men of the highest genius, and if we set apart certain exceptional cases, we may lay it down as a broad general rule that the desire for inequality in fame, even if it does not initiate artistic creation, or the pursuit of philosophic truth, is yet developed *pari passu* with them. There can be the desire for inequality in fame without the power of achieving it ; there can be the power of achieving it also, without the desire of doing so ; but in the latter case, almost as surely as in the former, there will be no power exercised. To this, as I have said already, there are, no doubt, exceptions ; but


that genius without ambition is not naturally self-developing, can be proved clearly by three orders of cases : first, by those in which it has lain dormant, until ambition has been excited by some external stimulus ; secondly, by those in which the love of pleasure has checked it ; and thirdly, by those (such was the case of Chatterton) in which non-recognition has nipped it. The exceptions to this, I believe myself, to be not numerous ; but if any one thinks otherwise I am not concerned to dispute the point. I am here insisting simply on the broad general truth that, not only as a rule, in men of the highest genius, is the artistic or scientific impulse allied with a desire for inequality of some sort, but that this alliance need have nothing mean or degrading in it. Nor is that all. I would have the reader realise more than that. I would have him realise that so far from being necessarily degrading, it is, on the contrary, normally right and healthy. It is the just expectation of all great artists and philosophers that they shall receive that honour which only

ignorance can refuse, and which only envy can grudge them ; and if the desire for this due inequality is in such men ever mean and ridiculous, it is not because they possess it, but because they pretend that they do not.

If all this be taken into consideration, the objections which I set out with anticipating will lose at once the greater part of their force. Even yet, however, I do not conceive that the objector will have been completely silenced. He will say, perhaps, that I have slipped away from the original question altogether ; that I have been talking latterly but of inequality in personal fame ; and that this is a thing wholly different from what is usually meant by social inequality. If he says this, I shall admit him to be entirely right ; but I shall ask him to again attend to a fact I have already noticed, namely, that artistic creation is but a small part, and scientific discovery no part, of what is usually meant by productive labour. And from this I shall now proceed to a very important consideration.

The inequality, we say, desired by the artist

and the man of science, is an inequality in fame; that desired by the productive labourer is an inequality in riches. Now apart from the intrinsic difference apparent in these two, there is this accidental difference also—that the former, as it were, is of the same substance with the work that leads to it; the latter is quite distinct. The fame of a scientific discoverer is essentially bound up with his discoveries; but a cotton-spinner's London house is not by any means bound up with his cotton-spinning. The reason of this is obvious. The desired results of the cotton-spinner's labour are in themselves of no interest beyond their homely use; and whatever ability may have gone to produce them, they bear in themselves no distinguishable record of it; they are not given away, so they excite no feelings of gratitude; and they thus throw no personal lustre on the character of their manufacturer. They exhibit him to the world neither as a great man, nor as a benevolent man. And of all other manufactured articles the same holds good, though not



always in exactly the same degree. Thus a fine cabinet, a china vase, or a piece of tapestry, suggests certain qualities in its producer, which a piece of cotton does not. These, however, are not by any means great enough to make their recognition a very dazzling prize ; and it will be found further that in exact proportion as a manufactured article is useful and of wide consumption, less and less is its producer, in a personal sense, suggested by it. Hence the motive necessary to cause him to produce, becomes more and more entirely dissociated from the product.

From these facts we may rise to the following general principle : The kind of inequality by which any labour is motivated varies according to the kind of benefit which that labour confers upon society ; and it varies thus. The more wide and more popular is the benefit, the more material is the kind of inequality aimed at ; and the higher and less material is the kind of inequality aimed at, the less wide and less popular is the benefit.

Thus the higher motive produces discoveries, but it does not produce inventions ; it may lead to the understanding of economic laws, but it will never lead to the establishment of any special trade or manufacture ; it may produce a great architect, but it will never produce a builder. The man who longs for truth unravels the laws of electricity, but it is the man who longs for a fortune who lights Charing-Cross Station with it.

And now we may have done with this aspect of the question. Our main proposition by this time has been reduced to its true proportions ; it has been stripped of all those fancied implications which might have raised distrust in the sensitive ; and it stands before us in such a condition that the question of its truth may be entertained dispassionately.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HUMAN CHARACTER AND THE DESIRE
FOR WEALTH.

FIRST, then, I shall suggest to the reader an exceedingly simple question. Wealth exists in the world, and it has been produced by men somehow. Why have men produced it? The answer seems obvious—men have produced it because men have wished to possess it: and that, in some sense or other, certainly must be true. But in giving that answer, what would most people mean by it? Would they mean that all men have wished to possess wealth—that it is a natural wish in fact, and may be taken for granted in every one? Or would they mean that it is an exceptional wish, not natural at all, and only acquired under certain special circumstances? To most people it will seem absurd to ask. Of course they will

say, all men wish for wealth, though unfortunately only a few can get it. Such, as we know, is the loose view current about the matter. I shall therefore ask the reader to consider the following imaginary case.

Let him imagine a race of unwarlike savages, living on an enchanted island, where loaves and roast mutton grew upon all the trees, and where the climate was so delightful that there was need neither for roof nor clothing. Here one might think would be the ideal cradle of wealth. Those necessities which in countries at present civilised the labourer has to expend all his powers in securing, the people here possess without any labour at all. They start, as it were, with their wages a free gift to them. Their entire time is their own; if they labour at all, it will not be to sustain life, but to embellish it; and whatever the results of any man's labour may be, there is no reason why he should not enjoy the whole of them. *Ex hypothesi* no one can be in want; *ex hypothesi* also, anybody might be in luxury. Would not such conditions fulfil

the very dream of the Democrat? Would not wealth, there, exist and be divided as it ought to be? One might think so at first; but what would be the case really? Supposing our islanders to be men like all other men, under such conditions wealth would be utterly unproducible. Conditions very similar actually do exist; and under these it actually is unproducible. As to this, we can speak with the utmost confidence. What is the reason of it?

The reason is plain. We have said that our islanders are savages; that is, they possess, to start with, none of the wants and therefore none of the motives that are caused by the sight or by the enjoyment of manufactured products of civilisation. They are motivated by those wants only which are inseparable from all animal life—the want to eat, and the want to reproduce their species. Thus though they can satisfy both these with next to no labour, and though they are free in consequence to employ a life-long leisure as it pleases them there is one way in which they

are never pleased to employ it, and that is in the production of luxuries. Productive labour is impossible to them. They are no more capable of it than they would be if they had neither hands nor muscles. Their island is rich, we will suppose, in coal and in all metals, but they sink no shafts, build no furnaces, smelt no iron. And why? They know nothing of what the use of coal and iron could do for them. They have never seen wealth, therefore they are unable to desire wealth; in the absence of desire there is no motive; and in the absence of motive there is no action, just as surely as in the absence of fire not a child's work will be done by the most gigantic steam-engine. A man who is always sure of sufficient to eat, who has no need either for shelter or clothing, who has neither seen nor heard of wealth, nor dreamed of the attractions it might hold out to him; such a man will be incapable of doing anything either to enrich or raise himself; and so will a nation of such men.

Let us suppose, however, that a stranger

arrives at our island — a man with the tastes and habits of civilisation ; and that he contrives to possess himself, by some means or other, of all the loaves and of all the legs of mutton. Let us suppose, further, that he withdraws them for a single day, that he makes the people feel the pangs of hunger, and that he declares he will starve them unless they obey his orders. In a single day energy is created. The thing that was not, is. Now, we have arms, and hands, and intelligence, endowed on a sudden with power and activity, and ready at once to be informed and guided by the intelligence of him who can give or withhold food. Now the nerveless, indolent, vacant savages become strong, industrious men, and thought begins to stir in them. A sleeping civilisation is being called forth into life. Our islanders have been transfigured, and made different beings, by this one agency — the agency of want, with the prospect of having their want satisfied.

Now here we have something that, though in its literal sense a fairy-tale, is yet symboli-

cally an accurate piece of history. It is true there are no islands where the trees bear loaves and roast mutton ; but there are islands in which there grows the sago-palm, and where a man by an hour's labour could secure food for a twelvemonth. There are other places in which, for other reasons, the means of subsistence are obtained even more easily. But in none of these places, except under foreign pressure, do the natives produce wealth.

It is not, however, only amongst tropical or sub-tropical savages that we can find parallels to our imaginary islanders. We can find them in Europe, in the very middle of civilisation. Not to go farther afield, we can find one in the Irish peasantry. The Irish have to labour it is true ; but why ? Because without labour they would perish with cold and hunger. The labour they do, however, is only just sufficient to raise them to that level on which without labour our islanders are placed naturally. It is the lowest level compatible with animal comfort. The Irish rise to that, and they develop some skill in the process ; but in spite

of their skill, beyond that level they cannot rise. Necessity may be the mother of invention; but it is the mother only of the invention of necessities. With the attainment of the necessities, their skill and their invention ceases. They can invent no more, because they want no more. They have no desire for a clean cottage with four or five rooms in it; they prefer a smoky hut. They have no desire for a house to put the pig in; they had far sooner that it kept the family company. Not only have they no desire for such improvement; they resent it if it is thrust upon them. Give them a clean cottage, they will instantly make it dirty. Put the pig in the pig-house, they will instantly have it back in the kitchen. What they want is not riches; it is simply a leisurely poverty. I have said this of the Irish, but it is not true only of them. They are simply a familiar type of the average of mankind in general wherever wealth is not directly before them, either in itself or in the means that lead to it. The average of mankind, all the world over, are, in that case,

exactly in the condition of our islanders. Wealth not being before them, they are unable to desire it.

I know this is a hard saying. Popularly it is supposed that the desire for wealth is of all desires the commonest and most natural; and any assertion that contradicts this, is sure to be met at first with a smile of incredulity. It is necessary, therefore, that we examine the matter carefully. First let me observe, then, that the popular supposition spoken of, like most popular suppositions, contains a certain truth in it: and that is exactly the reason why it is so misleading. We will begin by considering what this truth is. We need not go far to discover many recognised expressions of it. One of them, however, will be quite sufficient — the homely, proverbial saying, that *money will do anything*. Now in this saying there is nothing to find fault with. It is a loose way of stating what in a general way is true. It means that, except under certain special circumstances, money or its equivalent will, if the amount be

large enough, always secure from any man certain immediate services. But to say this is not in itself to say that the desire for wealth is naturally common to all men. The latter proposition is simply an inference from the first, and it is an inference of the falsest and most illogical kind. What the first proposition really says is, not that the desire for wealth is common to all men naturally; but that under one given condition it will always naturally develop itself; and that given condition is the sight of wealth. It is the very condition I have just now been insisting on. Let us take an illustration not from money, but from something strictly analogous to it. There are certain savages who have lived for ages ignorant of alcoholic liquors, but who once having tasted whisky will do anything in order to earn some more of it. Now amongst such men it might be said with perfect truth, not indeed that *money*, but that *whisky will do anything*. That does not mean, however, that they all desire whisky naturally: it means only that they desire it,

when once they have been made to taste it. And the same is the case with wealth, as civilised nations use the word ; only here the desire is more hard to develop, and it varies in its intensity with the conditions of its development.

I have already cited the cases of the Irish peasantry. Let us now turn to England and to the heart of our manufacturing districts. There we shall find colliers who, when times are good, earn more from week to week than many beneficed clergymen ; and amongst factory hands we shall find families whose earnings are larger still.¹ Now what, as a fact, do these people do with their money ? Some save, and invest it in various ways—very often, I am informed, in house property. But those are a small minority. As for the rest, however, the singular thing about them is, not that they do not save their money, but

¹ I was told, for instance, by one of the largest cotton-spinners in the kingdom, that amongst his employés were many families the united wages of each of which amounted to 300*l.* a year. I learnt from the same source many facts as to how such incomes were spent.

the manner in which they spend it. Not only do they spend it on nothing that can be of any permanent comfort to them, but they spend it on things that, in proportion to the price paid, can yield them at the moment the smallest amount of pleasure. Thus they will spend on grapes more than they do on house-rent ; they will buy a piano without knowing a note of music ; they will give beef-steak to their bulldogs ; and they have been known to smoke pipes with four bowls to them, so as to consume in a given time as much tobacco as possible.¹ And yet all this while they will be living in squalid cottages, with hardly a permanent comfort, and with not one refinement they can value in them. Now though these men very likely, if taken to some rich man's house, might look with a vague envy at his rooms, his pictures, and his furniture, it is plain that they really have no desire for such things ; for if they had, they might themselves have something similar. Again ; though if any

¹ Pipes of this kind were some years ago made at Newcastle. I do not know if the manufacture is continued.

one of them were offered a thousand pounds, it is needless to say that he would take the money with avidity, it is plain that, it not being offered him, he has no distinct desire for it. If he had, in five years he might save it.

Here, then, we have three classes of men—peasants, colliers, and factory hands, all living with wealth on every side of them; and yet the first class plainly does not desire it at all; and the two latter desire it so little that what they do receive of it, they virtually throw away from them.

But what, then, of those fierce class hatreds, of which we hear so much and see so many signs? These are all, it may be said, based on desire for wealth; and the whole of the present volume, I may be reminded, points to them. To this objection must be given a two-fold answer. Firstly, I am not now contending that the desire for wealth is not widely producible; but merely that it cannot exist without certain conditions to produce it. Secondly, I must point to a fact we have not yet touched upon, that the desire for


wealth is a very ambiguous thing, and is by no means always exactly what it seems to be. A sickly mother, we will say, with a half-starved family, sees a series of drags, piled with luncheon-baskets, passing her cottage door, on their way to Ascot races. Now the class hatred spoken of, it is admitted on all sides, is always fiercest when want is confronting luxury. The mother, therefore, we may well suppose, is moved to bitterness by the sight of the wealth before her, and wishes—wishes what? Not that she herself were driving a four-in-hand, or gossiping with the fine ladies she has just seen, or making love with the fine gentlemen; nor do visions of champagne, or lobster-salad, or ortolans stuffed with truffles, make her mouth water. She knows nothing of these things; they do not enter her imagination; whilst as for the servants, the ladies' dresses, the horses, and the glancing harness—all that, in its details, is but so much sound and fury to her; it signifies nothing. It affects her only as forming, in the aggregate, a vague symbol of profusion,

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Since then, even in an age like ours, when wealth of some kind is never far from anyone, and is flashing its attractions on all eyes openly, there are still large classes who have no true desire for it, and to whom it means no more than a certainty or a surfeit of what is necessary, it will be surely easy for the reader to realise this—that in those earlier states of society from which progress started, men must have been wholly unable to produce that which, even now, such numbers of them are, in their hearts, indifferent to. In other

words, our imaginary islanders form an accurate type, so far as wealth is concerned, not only of what men were before wealth was produced, but of what they would be again, if all wealth were destroyed. Accordingly, if we would understand the cause of civilised production, we must begin by referring to that primary state of society, and consider the steps which have led from that to our own.

What, then, let us ask, was the origin of wealth in the first place? If no one could produce it until he had first seen it produced, who can have been the first producer? The answer is to be found in a fact that I have hitherto purposely omitted, namely, that man was a warlike animal before he was an industrial one. The first inequalities were military inequalities; and the first beginnings of wealth were probably plundered necessities. As to this matter it is impossible to speak in detail; for every civilisation that has had a beginning in history, has owed its beginning to a civilisation that went before it; but detail here is of very little importance. It is



enough for us that at the earliest historical period, wealth was being produced already, and produced under certain conditions ; and that whenever a barbarous nation has since become civilised, the same conditions, or their equivalents, have invariably repeated themselves. The ancient civilisations, it is true, were all of them based on slavery ; and our modern civilisations are all of them based on wages ; but in the following point both systems are identical. They are both based on labour which is not only motived by the want of food, for all labour is motived by that primarily, but they are based on labour which is motived by the want of food in such a way, and under such conditions, that it does more than satisfy the wants by which it is motived. This is true, without exception, of every society that has hitherto risen from barbarism ; and it is borne witness to by every monument of its progress, from the walls of Babylon to the newest street in Chicago. In other words, whenever wealth has been produced, an essential factor in its production

has been the labour of men who, for its own sake, have had no wish to produce it. The Egyptian bricklayers cared nothing about the pyramids. In their eyes they were merely bye-products incidental to their securing the flesh-pots. The point for us to inquire, then, is, how has such labour been produced? And we can answer that at once by referring to our imagined islanders. The added power has been produced in every case by an operation precisely similar to that performed by the stranger—by the creation, in the first place, of an artificial want of food, and by then supplying the want on certain given conditions. But who is the stranger? What force does he symbolise? What is his counterpart in the actual history of civilisation? He symbolises three things—one in the ancient world, one in the modern, and a third in both. In the ancient world he symbolises the power of conquest; in the modern world he symbolises the power of society; in both he symbolises the power and the desires of a minority. Wherever in any society the production of

wealth has begun, there has always been present either overt physical force, which has made some men slaves, or certain social arrangements which have made some men free labourers; and there has always been a minority which has either possessed the force, or which, owing to circumstances, has profited by the social arrangements.

Let us now sum up this evidence, and see what it all comes to. The result is startling, but none the less is it incontrovertible. It amounts to this—that every civilisation that has ever existed in the world has been begun against the will of the majority of the human beings concerned in it; and when modern Democrats look back at the past, and declare that the history of it is one long history of oppression, they are simply bearing witness to the truth of this fact. They are admitting that civilisation in every case has been begun by a minority—and a minority whose motive was solely its own advancement.

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probably recognise this. So far as the past is concerned, and so far as the beginnings of civilisation are concerned, they will allow to a dominant minority the useful part just claimed for it. But in the course of progress they will say that all this has changed; and that the key to the present situation is to be found, not in man's rise from savagery to the beginnings of civilisation, but in his rise from the beginnings of civilisation to its latest and most advanced development. They will say, or more properly, they will imply, that during that process his entire character has changed; that the desires at first implanted in him with difficulty, have now taken root; and that, having so long been schooled to produce wealth for others, he is now in a condition to desire and to produce it for himself. The ascendancy of a minority, under whatever shape, is no longer needful for him.

To this I answer as follows. Between the average man as he was, at the beginning of civilisation, and the average man as he is,

amongst civilised nations now, there is no doubt a profound difference, not only in circumstances, but in character. But the difference in this last is not what, in the democratic argument, it is supposed to be. The character inherently is altogether the same. Its difference depends solely on the difference in the circumstances that develop it. Just as one form of inequality caused production to begin, so other forms of inequality have caused production to continue; and if production in these days is greater than it was under the Pharaohs, that is no sign that it depends less upon inequalities; but it is a result of inequalities being more elaborately organised.

This can only be proved, however, or indeed stated fully, by a direct reference to the history of industrial progress, and a careful consideration, not of its facts in detail, but of the different classes into which those facts divide themselves, and the sameness of the principles that underlie their differences. Now

the classes of facts in question are evidently two in number. The one consists of enterprises, discoveries, and inventions ; the other of the social conditions under which these have been made or utilised. Thus if we compare modern Europe with ancient Egypt, we may say that the former differed from the latter, partly in the possession of steam-power, partly in the possession of free labour ; and the classes of questions we shall have to deal with may be well typified by the following : What were the operations of character involved in the introduction of steam-power ? And how, with regard to labour, does the operation of character differ in a Birmingham workman and in a slave of Sesostriis ? Between these two subjects of inquiry, this distinction, as I say, is evident ; and yet, so far as I am aware, no democratic theorist has ever yet been at the trouble to distinguish them ; nor have they even been classified under any accepted names. I propose, therefore, for convenience' sake, to call the former Impersonal Progress, and the latter Personal Progress, seeing that

the special mark of the former consists in things done, and that of the latter in the condition of persons doing things; and I shall proceed in the following chapters to examine the two separately.

wealth is a very ambiguous thing, and is by no means always exactly what it seems to be. A sickly mother, we will say, with a half-starved family, sees a series of drags, piled with luncheon-baskets, passing her cottage door, on their way to Ascot races. Now the class hatred spoken of, it is admitted on all sides, is always fiercest when want is confronting luxury. The mother, therefore, we may well suppose, is moved to bitterness by the sight of the wealth before her, and wishes—wishes what? Not that she herself were driving a four-in-hand, or gossiping with the fine ladies she has just seen, or making love with the fine gentlemen; nor do visions of champagne, or lobster-salad, or ortolans stuffed with truffles, make her mouth water. She knows nothing of these things; they do not enter her imagination; whilst as for the servants, the ladies' dresses, the horses, and the glancing harness—all that, in its details, is but so much sound and fury to her; it signifies nothing. It affects her only as forming, in the aggregate, a vague symbol of profusion,

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asking this question, we are not asking for all the means, but we are asking only for the most distinctive means ; just as if I want to know how a message has been brought me I shall be satisfied if I know that a groom has brought it on horseback, or that a commissioner has brought it in a hansom ; and I shall not care to inquire who bred or shod the horse, or who built the hansom, or what induced either groom or commissioner to embrace their respective callings.

If, then, we consider any one of the facts in question, its existence will be at once associated with the name of some particular man, or the names of several such. Thus the name of Columbus will be associated with the discovery of America, that of Friar Bacon with the discovery of gunpowder, those of Watt, Stephenson, and others with the discovery and introduction of steam-power : and the popular impression we shall find to be, that these great events have been caused by the men whose names are associated with them. In other words, we shall find the popular impression to

be that the impersonal progress of industrial civilisation has been due to the genius of certain gifted individuals. I propose first to show that thus far the popular impression is right. Having done that, I shall proceed to the further inquiry, as to what were the motives by which these individuals have been actuated.

It may perhaps be asked by some, if the impression I speak of be the popular one, what need is there that I should waste time in insisting on it? An answer will be found by referring to certain passages which I have already quoted from Mr. Herbert Spencer. It will be recollected that he, in the strongest manner possible, has declared this impression to be an altogether erroneous one. It is fatal, he says, to any true understanding of progress, and scientific thought is steadily undermining it. It is this impression which, when put in a distinct form, he has denounced so unsparingly as '*the great-man theory*'; and his treatment of which I have already had occasion to criticise. If Mr. Spencer's view of the matter,

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sense, the author of his own volumes. He is the origin, of course, of the mere manual labour involved in them ; but for the rest he has been little more than a shorthand writer, taking notes of what society has dictated to him ; and he is as little himself a philosopher in the vulgar sense of the word, as a newspaper reporter is himself the whole House of Commons. The idea in Mr. Spencer's mind is sufficiently obvious ; I have no wish to caricature it ; and there is in it also a truth which I am directly about to recognise. Mr. Spencer's error lies in putting a third of the truth for the whole ; and, because men previously had neglected that one-third, now revenging himself by denying the other two. In the first place, then, no man in these days any longer imagines that a man, however great, is independent of the times he lives in. Unless a vast amount of knowledge had been already accumulated, Mr. Spencer himself could never have speculated as he has done. Thus society, in a certain sense, we may admit, has certainly made him. But having admitted

this, there arise two distinct questions : first, in what sense is it that society has made him? and secondly, in considering the cause of his philosophy, can he as an individual, and distinct from society, be left out of count?

Now, in reading Mr. Spencer's works, if there is one thing that strikes one more immediately than another, it is the supreme contempt displayed by him everywhere for the opinions of society generally. He can hardly touch upon any question without bringing forward some instance of the ludicrous misbeliefs that at present prevail regarding it; nor does he find his misbelievers amongst the unlettered classes only, but amongst men who, however faulty may be their theories, are, so far as fame and genius go, amongst the most remarkable of his contemporaries. Now, I am not for a moment saying that in most cases Mr. Spencer may not be right, and those whom he criticises wrong. All I want to insist on is this. If of the society, of which Mr. Spencer is himself a part, and which, according to his own theory, has made him, an over-

whelming majority, does not only not believe his philosophy, but is still wedded to the fallacies that are most opposed to it, it is plain that whatever Mr. Spencer represents, he cannot represent that society as a whole. If he represents anything outside himself, and this he no doubt does, he represents only a certain select part of it. He represents, that is, a minority which is struggling with a refractory majority. In other words, if he refuse to be thought influential as being a great man himself, he is influential as representing a certain knot of great men.

Secondly, to this knot of great men what are his own relations? He has imbibed from them a certain view of things in general, and he has made himself master of an enormous amount of facts, which these men, in the first instance, collected. But after that, what has he done with them? He has certainly done something, or he conceives himself to have done something. He has not left matters in the exact state in which he found them. On the contrary, if we may take the opinion of a

number of intelligent people, he has done something of very great importance; and it can hardly be doubted that himself he shares this view. Here, then, is Mr. Spencer, who is influential not only as representing the thoughts of a minority, but as having added an important something to these thoughts himself. What, therefore, are we to say about him? In proportion as he is influential, is he not a great man? And is he not, as such, himself the cause of his influence? Perhaps he would say, were the question thus put to him, that he was merely a tool in the hands of circumstances, and that if he had not played his part someone else would have played it for him. But what would this mean? It might mean two things. It might mean that anybody would have been equal to the task Mr. Spencer has himself performed—which is plainly untrue; and that anybody would have performed it had it happened to come in his way—which is plainly untrue also; or it might mean that had Mr. Spencer not existed, there would have been another man equally

great instead of him—which, so far as the *great-man theory* goes, is simply to put one great man for another, and does not alter the case.

It is just as plain, therefore, in Mr. Spencer's case, as it was in that of Columbus, that he is the cause of the achievement with which his name is associated ; and the same will hold good of all other great men whatever. Let me dwell, however, a little longer on what we here mean by *cause*. Let me repeat once again that I know as well as Mr. Spencer knows, and acknowledge as fully as he acknowledges, that the things accomplished by any great man, could not have been accomplished by him independently of his circumstances. But it is equally true, and it is a far more important truth, that his circumstances could not have accomplished them independently of him. Columbus could never have crossed the Atlantic if he had had no sailors with him ; but it is simply a piece of idle pedantry to name the sailors amongst the causes of his crossing it. Sailors are essential to all voy-

ages. Columbus was essential to this voyage. Again, in Mr. Spencer's case, all the materials of his philosophy may have been ready to his hand. He may have had to do very little original work in putting them together. But still that work had to be done by someone; and the man who did it has been as much and as truly the cause of it, as a match is of a conflagration. Suppose, for instance, that Mr. Spencer's library caught fire, and that the manuscript was destroyed of some new volume of his philosophy. If he wished to ascertain what was the cause of the catastrophe, he would not inquire as to the nature of the paper he had written upon, and say that his book had been burnt because paper was highly inflammable; but as soon as he discovered that there had been a match on his writing-desk which had been ignited by accidental friction, he would then be satisfied that he had found the true cause. He would care to go no farther. He would not ask who sold the match, who made the match, or who was the person who first invented matches. He would

rest content with the fact that a match was in itself a thing possessing certain qualities, and that it would ignite under certain circumstances. Now, the composition of a match, and the circumstances under which it will ignite, are so familiar to Mr. Spencer that he would not need to inquire into them. But was this not so—were matches very rare natural products, which were found in certain places nobody yet knew how, and went off nobody yet knew why, all his inquiries, as a scientific student, would centre on the genesis of the match, and the circumstances of its ignition. And with great men the case is exactly similar. If Mr. Spencer, then, likes to degrade them, here is a simile at once trivial and accurate to his hand. He may call them the lucifer matches of the world: only, in that case, I tell him that the conflagrations these matches cause, depend for their occurrence on what the heads of the matches are made of, and the kind of surfaces they go off upon. That is to say, they depend on the lives and the characters of the great men themselves,

and must be studied in these great men's biographies—in their biographies, not singly, but taken one with another, and examined by the comparative method. If this examination shows us no points of resemblance between them, then we can no more explain the events the great men have initiated, we can no more connect them with other events and circumstances, than we could connect a fire with the common order of nature, if any stick of wood, with something black at the end of it, no matter what, could become a lucifer match. And in one way, let me remark, this is the exact state of the case. It is as yet unexplained, with regard to any individual birth, why the child born is a male or female ; it is equally unexplained, indeed it seems even more inexplicable, why one child is born a potential genius, and its brother a potential dunce. Though, however, we can, neither by biographical nor other studies, arrive at any general law with regard to the production of potential genius, we can arrive at a most distinct general law with regard to its develop-

ment into actual genius ; and the biography of every great man—every great man, at least, who has helped forward material progress—exhibits the following special fact in support of it.

Every great man who has either opened a new line of commerce, enriched the world with a new invention, or enslaved for man's use some new force of nature, has always been actuated, not solely but largely, by the desire for social inequality of some sort. Let us turn once again to Columbus ; his case is to the point especially. I have admitted already that there is a certain class of achievements which are in themselves of such a nature that they bring, as it were, their own inequality with them, and that the hope of this in some cases has nerved men to achieve them, without any hope added to it of social inequality properly so called. Now, if any achievement belongs to this class, one might certainly have thought that such would be the discovery of a new world. But let us consider the facts of history, the facts of human nature. Columbus, the one

man of his age who could conceive this splendid project, the one man with patience, with hope, with courage to carry it into execution—did he find the splendour, or the use of it, sufficient motives in themselves to induce him to undertake it? His biography shall answer for him. He had, as everyone knows, many difficulties to battle against—apathy, ignorance, superstition, incredulity—before he could gain assistance to so much as begin his venture; but to all these he added another of his own making, and that was the immense personal reward he demanded for himself should the venture prove successful. He demanded that he should be at once ennobled with the title of Admiral of the Seas, and that this office and title should be hereditary in his family, that he should have one-tenth of all the merchandise brought back from the countries he should discover, and a right to an eighth part of the expenses and consequent profits of each trading transaction that should hereafter take place with them. It will thus be seen that, beyond the ambition of the discoverer, there was the distinct

ambition in him of a man who desired to raise his family : and the importance, as a motive, of this ambition may be gauged by the fact that, till the prospect of gratifying it was held out to him, he refused to move a step towards the accomplishment of his great enterprise.¹

Now in Columbus we have a perfect type of the action of human nature in promoting impersonal progress, or if in any way he fails to be wholly typical, it is not because the desire for inequality was so prominent among his motives, but because it was accompanied by so many motives besides. If we study the history of any enterprise or invention, the purpose of which has been either the manufacture of wealth or the exchange of it, we shall find in the lives of all the great men concerned in it, desires equivalent to those of

¹ It is, of course, not meant that all discoveries, such as those of Columbus, have been motivated by the desire for social inequality. The recent polar expeditions, for instance, have been motivated mainly by scientific curiosity. The discovery of Columbus is cited here as an event simply in the material progress of the world ; and it is specially valuable as showing that not even the accidental glory attached to it obviated the necessity of some more material motive.

Columbus for his share in the commerce of the Indies, and for the proud position he asked for his own family. We shall find a distinct desire for social inequality of some sort; it may be one of money only, it may be one of rank only, or it may be one of both; and the more exclusively useful is the purpose of the enterprise or the invention, the more exclusively shall we find this desire for inequality to be the motive of it. It may, no doubt, be said that a number of the most important inventions owe their origin, in one sense, to events that have been little else but accidents. That of glass, for instance, is said to have been accidental altogether, and the steam-engine first became self-acting through a little boy's idleness.¹ But these cases, and the numerous

¹ Newcomen's steam-engine, it is well known, used originally to be regulated by a boy, who had to open and shut an injection-cock at each stroke of the piston. But at last a boy named Humphrey Potter contrived a catch attached to the beam of the engine, by which the injection-cock was opened automatically. We may note that the boy called this catch a '*scoggan*,' by which he meant an apparatus that enabled him to idle—to '*scog*' in the North of England meaning to skulk, or shirk work. Thus even this boy was motivated by the desire

others like them, do not make against what I am now saying. Such happy accidents, such triumphs of a chance ingenuity, add nothing in themselves to the general wealth of the world. Whether the discovery be a new substance or a new mechanical contrivance, it has in the first place to be perfected, and in the second place to be multiplied and introduced to the public. Until it has undergone this double process, so far as progress is concerned, it is unborn, it is non-existent. Progress depends not on inventions and discoveries only, but on the extent to which these are applied to the world in general. It is in the perfecting, the producing, the multiplying the things discovered or invented—be they glass, or printed matter, or gas-lighting, or railways, or whatever we like to name—it is in this, so far as the world is concerned, that material progress lies: and the labours of the men we are concerned with have been labours in this field.

Let the reader consider for a moment three

of leisure, a thing that can only exist where there are social inequalities.

of the above-named cases, namely, those of printed matter, gas-lighting, and railways. Amongst the earlier printers there was, no doubt, prevalent much of the ambition of the scholar, and much of the instinct of the artist ; and to us this may seem more conspicuous in them than the desire for inequality in money. But not only shall we find that in them even this last desire existed, but we shall find also that it increased in their successors in exact proportion as printing became cheaper, and books were multiplied. The history of gas-lighting is altogether analogous. That an inflammable gas is evolved from coal during the process of its destructive distillation was first discovered by a clergyman in 1739. The fact was published in '*The Transactions of the Royal Society*,' and it soon engaged the attention of other well-known experimentalists. But more than half a century had elapsed after its first discovery before any one thought of making any practical application of it ; and even after it had been first applied practically, twenty years elapsed before that

practical application was completed and introduced to the public. During that period it had been applied only to one house in Cornwall, one factory near Birmingham, and on one occasion to one London theatre. Nothing more had been done, and this was the reason. The fact in question and the invention based upon it had been not yet seized upon by men who were able to make money by them. In 1813 they were so seized upon. The matter passed into the hands of a regular commercial company, and almost instantly there were gas-lamps all over Europe. The history of the railway engine and the extension of the railway system, both point to conclusions in the same direction, which are almost too obvious to require our dwelling upon them. The railway engine was perfected by the patient and competing labours of a number of men, who had all the same motive, and that motive was the desire to make money. The more carefully we study the details of the question the more profoundly will this fact be impressed upon us ; whilst if we turn from the construction of the

railway engine to the extension of the railway system, the names of Brassey, of Brunel, and of Stephenson, will carry their own instruction to us.

Evidence of this kind might be multiplied indefinitely ; but any reader of ordinary information will be able to supply it for himself. He need only turn to facts which he knows already on one side, and reversing them, examine the other. That discoverers, inventors, manufacturers, merchants, all of them aim at wealth, and the most successful attain it, is a truth as trite as that the sun rose yesterday ; but its full scientific significance has never yet been recognised. The attainment of wealth by such men when successful has been regarded rather as a usual accident of their case, than an essential factor in it ; and thus the Democrat can argue plausibly that it is an accident, a chance result, which in the future it will be possible to obviate. But this view of the matter is wholly unscientific, and the real principle involved in it is lost sight of altogether—the

principle that while the attainment of wealth is the general result of the success, the desire of wealth is the invariable motive of the endeavour. The proposition as to the result, and the proposition as to the motive, although so closely connected, are wholly distinct things. The first, if separated from the second, is not a scientific generalisation at all. It is simply a statement as to what has happened hitherto, but need not happen always. To say that wealth is the general result of industrial success, is to refer to nothing but existing social conditions; which, for all that the statement tells us, may be altered to any extent. But to say that the desire of wealth is the invariable motive of it, is to refer to human nature itself, and to lay down a permanent and a universal law.

All, then, that I need ask the reader to do, is to look at the reverse side of what he knows quite well already. The discoverers, the inventors, the merchants, the manufacturers, whose lives have marked epochs in the history of material progress, have not only made

wealth but they have been made by it. If wealth had not been attainable, the genius of such men would have been wholly undeveloped. It would have been practically non-existent. It would have been an acorn, not an oak. What the earth is to the acorn, the desire of inequality is to such men's genius. In proportion as inequality has been possible, that genius has developed itself; in proportion as inequality has been impossible, that genius has been unapparent. So intimately indeed is it connected with the special desire in question, that its practical effect on the material progress of the world could be almost expressed in terms of that desire itself—its definiteness, its strength, and the nearness or remoteness of the object of it. Every observation that it is possible to make in the matter confirms and illustrates this great general law. Our materials for observation we find both in the past and present, in different countries and different stages of civilisation; and we find always and everywhere the same law acting.

But we must not content ourselves with

appealing solely to the width and the solidity of this inductive basis. Some may feel themselves still able to argue that the desire for inequality, whatever may have been its function hitherto, is capable, under new conditions, of being replaced by some other desire, which as a motive will produce the same results. Now if this contention be worth anything, its worth depends on its relation to observed facts, and the motive it refers to must be some motive in particular. What can be this motive? The answer to the question is obvious, as only one has ever been proposed, and only one is in the smallest degree plausible. The motive that it is said by some is to supersede the desire for inequality, is the desire for the welfare of the human race at large. It is general benevolence, as opposed to private selfishness. Let us therefore ask on what scientific foundation the opinion rests, that this new motive will really do the work of the old one? To ask the question is in itself to refute the opinion. Actions motivated by benevolence have been sufficiently marked

in history to show us clearly enough their constant limits and purpose. This purpose has never been the creation of new forms of wealth ; it has been simply the alleviation of the existing pains of poverty. Benevolence relieves those in want or sickness, it provides instruction and even amusement for those who would be else without them. It builds hospitals, schools, and almshouses, and it gives playgrounds to the people : but there its work ends. There is nothing inventive in it.

It may prompt men to give a cup of cold water to the thirsty ; but it will not lead them to manufacture a new liqueur. It may prompt them now to give a poor man some tobacco ; but supposing tobacco unknown to Europe, it would not lead them to introduce it from America. Is it conceivable that benevolence, before the days of railways, could have made anyone burn to send his fellows travelling from London to York at the rate of a mile a minute ? Or had the most ardent philanthropist, before the days of telegraphs, been considering the lot of a happy family in the country, would

the wish ever have occurred to him that he could add to its happiness by placing it in communication with every city in Europe? The answer is plainly, *no*; and our certainty in the matter comes from our wide experience of what benevolence has accomplished hitherto. That experience is all we have to go upon; and any belief in the matter not supported by that, is nothing better than an idle piece of dreaming. Experience teaches us that as a motive to action, benevolence is excited by one class of things only—privation, pain, or any marked want of pleasures already enjoyed by others; but except for the purpose of attacking such evils, it is powerless to produce either practical thought or labour. It may perhaps flutter the wings of fancy, and suggest Utopias where man has conquered nature entirely; but it never awakens that creative imagination which shall grasp a scheme of conquest in any of its practical details; still less can it rouse that strong and dogged resolve which alone can push such schemes to any successful issue.

As regards, then, the impersonal progress of the world, we may consider this much to be established—firstly, that such progress is so far caused by certain gifted individuals, that without their intervention it would be impossible ; and secondly, that their intervention would be impossible unless motivated by the desire for social inequality ; to which we must add that this desire is inoperative, except in a society in which social inequality is attainable. It follows, therefore, that all those triumphs of progress on which the modern Democrat lays so much stress—our œcumenical commerce, our railways, our telegraphs, our newspapers, our multiplied products of all kinds, would have been utterly unproducible except in a society constructed on the principle of inequality. It will appear further, from the various examples that have been cited, that whatever changes such progress may have brought with it, it has brought no change in this respect to the human character ; but that, on the contrary, the desire for inequality is, not only as a motive, as necessary now as

ever, but that its action is, if anything, even greater and more apparent.

Perhaps, however, the Democrats will urge that the impersonal progress of civilisation has advanced far enough already. They may say, in fact, as Lassalle distinctly did say, that it can be never suffered to come altogether to a standstill, and that personal progress is the sole progress of the future; and while granting that social inequality has been requisite to bring the world's annual output of wealth to its present state, they may say that it is not requisite now for maintaining it in the state to which it has been brought. The business started through inequality can be carried on through equality.

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in view no such extensive utility ; the propensity to truck, barter, or exchange one thing for another. Whether this propensity be one of those original principles in human nature, of which no further account can be given . . . it belongs not to our present subject to inquire. It is common to all men, and to be found in no other race of animals.' Smith illustrates this in a few brief paragraphs ; he then dismisses the subject altogether, apparently wholly unconscious of its extent and importance ; nor do any of his successors seem to have been more clear-sighted, or to have added anything worth mentioning to his crude and meagre observations.

The singular part, however, is not that the propensity Smith mentions is an insufficient explanation of the beginnings of the division of labour, but that the beginning of that division should be all that he attempted to explain. One might have thought that having asked himself how it began, he would have been led naturally to ask himself how it was developed, and finally how it is still main-


tained. '*It gives occasion,*' he observes, '*to general opulence,*' but this opulence, he expressly states, has no direct connection with the propensity to truck, barter, or exchange. How, then, has the general opulence been produced? It has not been produced automatically, or by accident. Some new motive, or as Smith would say, some new propensity, must have been concerned in it. What can this be? Smith observes, it is true, and with great justice, that division of labour is the cause of the diversity of men's talents. It enables one savage to perfect himself as a hunter, another to perfect himself as a tanner, and another to perfect himself as a maker of bows and arrows; but the only occupation and the only talents he names are those necessary for procuring the bare means of existence. What, when these means are supplied in sufficient abundance, has caused labour still to continue, and still further to differentiate itself—that he never inquires. Had this last question ever occurred to him, he would have found that it fixed his attention

on a wholly new order of facts. He would have seen that the division of labour proper to savagery, and the division of labour proper to civilisation, were marked off from each other by two points of difference. In the first place the former, as we have just noticed, aims only at producing the bare means of existence; but the latter begins exactly where the former ends, and aims at raising on a sufficiency of the means of existence a superstructure of wealth and luxury. In the second place, and this is more important still, the former involves only variety, or co-ordination of labours; the latter involves inequality, or subordination also. To maintain savages in a state of stationary competence, labours need only be various: to produce or maintain civilisation, they need not only be various, but unequal. Thus in providing a savage village with food, the hunter and the maker of bows and arrows, though they play different, yet play equal parts. Man for man, one does as much as the other. But in constructing a railroad, a navvy and an engineer, man for man, play parts that

are wholly unequal. The labour of the latter affects the whole undertaking; that of the former, perhaps only a millionth part. We may say, therefore, that so far as labour is concerned, civilisation and savagery differ from each other in this way: that whereas both are equally based upon the simple division of it, the former, as distinct from the latter, is based on the division being graduated. Thus presuming the division of it in any case, we may say that the special and distinctive cause of civilisation is not the division but the graduation of labour. It is the graduation of labour that is the cause of the railway and the newspaper. It is the graduation of labour that enables any fellow-feeling to spring up between peoples, or makes even the dream of democratic solidarity possible. And on it every hope and prospect of the modern Democrat depend. Our present inquiry, therefore, resolves itself into this:—To what cause in human nature is this graduation of labour due? What, when some men are shepherds, or carters, or dock-labourers, is the cause of

other men being skilled mechanics, or electricians, or engineers, or chemists? Why, when on their labours some men expend so little thought, do others expend so much?

The cause, I have said over and over again already, is the desire for social inequality. Thus far, however, I have only stated this answer. I am now about to substantiate it. For this purpose there are abundant materials lying on every side of us, which by the commonest observation we might, any one of us, seize upon. It happens, however, that we can be spared even this trouble; for they have been already collected by others, and are arranged ready to our hands; and that in the very quarter where, from what I have just been saying, we might least expect to find them. I allude to the writings of the great political economists. Political economists, as I have already said, hardly so much as ask the question we are now considering; and even when they have asked it, they have shown no conception of its importance, and



only a very imperfect conception of its nature. The reason of this, however, is, not that it is so remote from the subject of their own inquiries, but that it is so very near to it. They do not see it indistinctly for the former reason, but they overlook it for the latter. All the while, as it were, it is lying under their feet. It is beneath their ken ; it is beyond it. One of the principal questions with which the political economist deals, is why different labourers are paid at different rates ; and he explains the fact by reference to the existing conditions of society. But he fails to see that what he regards as a result is in reality the universal cause also. He gives us elaborate reasons why wages are paid in proportion to skill ; but it never occurs to him that the graduation of skill, as a universal rule, is developed in proportion to wages. To prove, however, that such is really the case, we have but to repeat a process which I dwelt upon in the preceding chapter ; we have simply to invert the facts which the political economist supplies us with, and refer them not super-

ever, but that its action is, if anything, even greater and more apparent.


Perhaps, however, the Democrats will urge that the impersonal progress of civilisation has advanced far enough already. They may say, in fact, as Lassalle distinctly did say, that it can be never suffered to come altogether to a standstill, and that personal progress is the sole progress of the future; and while granting that social inequality has been requisite to bring the world's annual output of wealth to its present state, they may say that it is not requisite now for maintaining it in the state to which it has been brought. The business started through inequality can be carried on through equality.

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agents in the joint product should be remunerated at different rates ; whereas, if the process were begun and completed by the one man, the commonest or easiest labour bestowed by him would have to be paid at the rate of the highest and hardest.'

Now, all these passages deal with this one fact, that the amount and quality of labour done by a man are related in some way or other to the amount of reward offered him. But only in the first case is the least attempt made to state explicitly what this relation is. In the case of the soldiers paid by piece-work, Smith puts, no doubt, the matter in the right way. He represents the inequality in the reward as the cause of the inequality in the work ; but the slight and cursory stress which he lays upon the doctrine shows how little he realised either its importance or its universality ; whilst, when we come to the other two passages—Smith's text and Professor Thorold Rogers' comments on it—this doctrine in any distinct form is lost sight of altogether. Slaves, we are told, will always exert themselves but

little, because they have no motive to exert themselves much. Professor Thorold Rogers says this is a plain fact. But why is it plain? It is not plain as a fact of observation certainly, because most of us have never seen any slaves, and know very little about them. It can be plain only, if it is plain at all, as being a deduction from a known universal law, that all labour, whether that of slaves or other men, is proportionate to the magnitude of the motive, or that unequal reward is the cause of unequal labour. Again, when it is mentioned as a matter of great importance '*that the different agents in the given product should be remunerated at different rates,*' it is, of course, understood that in this way we save money, and the fact that we do so is presumed to be as plain to us as the preceding one. But again we ask why is it plain? Only because, or in so far as it is plain to us, that we can produce the lower kinds of labour by a low rate of wages, and that we can produce the higher kinds of labour only by a high rate. That is to say, we have another tacit reference

to the law just mentioned of unequal rewards, and another tacit assumption of its universality.

We might go through the works of all the economists who have ever written, and in almost every illustration taken by them from any branch of industry we should find the same thing. We should find the same universal law either illustrated or tacitly referred to. It is true we should find further that the reference was only tacit, and the illustrations only semi-conscious. On no one occasion should we find the law distinctly stated, dragged forth from the dim regions of implication, and showing itself in intellectual daylight. And this is the reason why the modern democratic theorists, though they acknowledge the doctrines of the economists to be true in the present state of society, conceive we can change society so that they shall be true no longer. In other words, as I have twice observed already, they refer these doctrines to society, and not to human nature. For this error the economists are themselves to blame. Their science, as they present it to us,

is a science upside down. Its roots, its first principles, are in the air. They have never been planted in their proper and solid soil—the uniform, the unalterable, the ascertainable facts of the common human character. Had they been so some hundred years ago, much of the democratic speculation of the present century would have been well-nigh impossible, and the world might have been spared in consequence many vain expectations, many bitter disappointments, much bloodshed in the past, and not a little danger for the future. Men may easily be persuaded that a revolution can metamorphose society ; it will be harder to persuade them that it can create a new human nature ; and this last is the only revolution that could fundamentally alter the existing state of things.

But though the economists, as I say, have failed to show this themselves, the facts they have collected afford an overwhelming proof of it. They have examined carefully every branch of industry on which our existing civilisation depends, and in every branch they have

encountered the same phenomenon, namely, that unequal reward goes with unequal labour, and that when the rewards are equal the labours are equal also. The ascent from these multitudinous particulars to the universal law, when once it has occurred to us to make it, is the work of a moment. Since where there is no inequality in the reward labour never rises above its simplest or its most necessary forms, and where there is inequality in the reward it does rise above them, it follows that inequality in the reward is the cause of this rise in labour. That is to say, the human character is so constituted that without the desire of this inequality as a motive, the higher forms of skill, or even of application, are wholly unproducible. It is not that men would not choose to produce them, but that they could not produce them. Just as a woman is the proper cause of a man's falling in love, so the inequality spoken of is the proper cause of a man's developing skill in labour ; and to say that any other cause but this could make him develop it, would be about as true as to say that, in the absence of

a woman, he would be made to fall in love by the table-cloth.

There are many truths which until they have been formally stated all the world may by implication reason from, and yet consciously be so little aware of their nature, that even the gravest thinkers at times may by implication utterly ignore them. Once, however, let the formal statement be made, and the whole case changes. The truths in question, like the angel sent to Balaam, suddenly stand before us, barring our intellectual path, and whether we will or no they compel us to take heed of them. Then one or other of two things happens. We either at once recognise and assent to them unbidden ; or else an assent is wrung from us by our being made to face the alternatives. A truth of this kind is the one we are at present dealing with. Now that it has been distinctly stated, let the reader ask himself if it is possible to contradict it. If he can contradict it, he can do so for one reason only—only because he has some other proposition which he can put in place of

it. If the desire for social inequality be not, as has been said, the cause of the graduation of labour, something else must be ; and that something else must be some other human motive. What can that motive be then ? There are only two which can be even plausibly mentioned. One is benevolence, or a feeling which prompts a man to do his best for the community ; the other is the pleasure which a man feels for his own sake in doing the best of which he feels himself to be capable. Let us consider if it be for a moment possible to ascribe the graduation of labour to either of these motives.

As to benevolence, in connection with inventors and discoverers, we have dwelt upon that already ; and we have seen that, by itself, even with those men, it is utterly powerless as a motive. Much more then shall we find it to be so in the present case. If it is unable to rouse even genius into activity, so as to nerve a single man to increase the wealth of millions, it is hardly likely that it will have a greater effect upon skill, and produce equal


labour for the sake of infinitely smaller results. If it were not the cause of Columbus's discovering a new continent, it will hardly be the cause of a clerk's learning book-keeping by double entry. Indeed, the very conception that a man, in the world either of commerce or production, should attempt to develop his faculties from a sense of universal benevolence, would have been too fantastic to be even worth considering, if modern positivism had not actually suggested it. If any one thinks otherwise, let him put his opinion to a homely practical test. Let him go where he will, through the whole civilised world—to London, to Birmingham, to Paris, or to New York, and in any grade of any branch of business, let him do what he can, amongst all the skilled employés, to discover one who performs his work out of benevolence. Where will he find such a man? Does he suppose that an engine-driver on the Great Northern Railway is consumed with a desire that Cockneys should see Edinburgh? Or that the captain of a Cunard steamer is an apostle of international

commerce? Or that telegraph clerks need have any feeling but apathy with regard to the benefits arising from a quick transmission of messages? Or supposing that he actually here and there did meet a man who professed and even felt some of these grand and promising sentiments, would he find that such men gave their services gratis, or at any rate took no more from them than they could earn as agricultural labourers? There we may find a test at once simple and conclusive; and it will apply equally to the other supposition also, that the graduation of labour is due to a natural tendency in a man to do the best he can with his talents, for his own personal satisfaction. For if either this tendency or else benevolence were the cause of the graduation of labour, and not the desire for inequality in reward, then skilled labour would be as cheap as unskilled. An experienced ship's captain, for instance, could be had for a common seaman's wages; which, it need hardly be said, is certainly not the case. It is true now as ever, indeed it is even more

true, that labour must be rewarded in proportion to its excellence ; or there will else be no excellence to reward. It is not only that on no other condition will the labourer develop his faculties ; but on no other condition will he use them when already developed. Nor can any one urge that this present state of affairs is due to our social arrangements, and not to human nature. For if human nature were ever really capable of being motivated to skilled production by anything but the desire for inequality, no social arrangements could tend so strongly as ours do to bring that capacity to the surface. It is the notorious wish and endeavour of all modern employers to secure skilled labour at as cheap a rate as possible. If, therefore, skilled labour can be really motivated by benevolence, or by any other motive except the desire for inequality, the labourers of to-day have every facility afforded them for making the fact apparent. They have only to do willingly the very thing which their employers would make them do ; and which they with a vigour that increases

every day declare they will never dream of doing.

Perhaps, however, it will be said in reply to this, that though skilled labourers at present doubtless get all they can, and if they can get much refuse to work for little, yet this covetousness on their part has no essential connection with their skill ; but that our social arrangements, though they do not indeed cause its existence, are none the less the occasion of its exercise. They give to skilled labour, it may be said, an opportunity for the time being to dictate its own terms, much as a lodging-house keeper does during the height of her seaside season ; and just as the lodging-house keeper will be reasonable when she is unable to be extortionate, so will skilled labour be when our social arrangements are altered. It seems not impossible that this answer might be given ; but if any one thinks that it really meets the case, he may reflect for a moment on the following obvious fact which, obvious as it is, is very often forgotten. When we speak of skill in production, be it of whatever kind—



that of the artisan, of the engineer, of the man of science, or the business manager—we have not to deal with a thing that if once called into existence is once for all put at the world's disposal. On the contrary, all of it that is at this moment in operation, in another forty years will have gone and have perished utterly ; and within that period all of it, from the very beginning, will have had to be re-created in a new race of beings. Man's civilisation is nothing but a castle of sand, for ever dissolving, and for ever being heaped up again ; and were the latter process suspended for but one half-century, the whole of the vast fabric would have sunk to a shapeless ruin. Where and what are the men at the present moment, who in the next generation will be dispelling the darkness with electricity, scattering truths or falsehoods to all the winds from the printing-press, and conquering distance by the railway or the ocean-steamer ? Some of them are in their cradles, some at the infant school. Some of them cannot speak ; few of them yet can spell ; none of them

practically know more about steam than Adam did ; or as much of geography and navigation as Ulysses. By patient effort they have to learn everything. The task is not easy for any of them ; for some of them it is arduous in the extreme. None of them can accomplish it except by their own will—by their own will forcing its way through difficulties. By what motive, then, is this will to be roused and fortified ? A bare subsistence can be gained by the simplest form of labour ; and millions never attempt to fit themselves for any other. Why should a minority thus elect voluntarily to fulfil functions of this exceptional character ? No external power can possibly make them do so ; for until they themselves have chosen to show their talent, no one else can tell that they have any talent to show. It rests with themselves to develop it, or to let it lie fallow. If, therefore, skilled labour can dictate its own terms now, and if it refuse to exert itself except for unequal wages, it must, as long as civilisation continues, always be equally master of the situation ; and until the human charac-

ter shall have been altogether revolutionised, it will always continue to use its advantage similarly.

The foregoing observations will have shown the reader thus much—that the inequality in reward which at present always accompanies the graduation of labour, is in no way the accidental result of existing social arrangements, but is the necessary result of the constitution of the human character. Even yet, however, the argument is not closed ; it may still be open to the objector, while he admits the above truth, to urge that in the future the human character may change. Mr. Herbert Spencer, for example, does say precisely this ; and the theory, in loose terms, is parroted on every side of us. What shall we reply to it? As regards Mr. Spencer the dispute can be settled easily ; for unless he has much misrepresented his own meaning, the change in the human character which he speaks of, he regards as a thing which it may take ages to accomplish ; indeed, the period he requires for it is apparently quite beyond calculation. With

him, therefore, for practical purposes, there can be no discussion. In incalculable time, incalculable things may happen. But if any thinker ventures to be more definite, and, clearly stating the change which is at this moment in question, maintains that it will occur within any time that is appreciable—if he maintains that in twenty-five years, or in fifty, or even in a hundred, or a hundred and fifty, the desire for inequality will have not only ceased to be operative, but that some other motive will be doing its work instead of it, then at once we shall know what to say to him. We shall ask him, if he can, to show us any sign whatever either in the present or the past, or in the present as compared with the past, which may lead us to think that such a change is even possible. In the present, as we have seen, there is no such sign apparent; on the contrary, the desire for inequality is, as a motive, more powerful now than ever; and whatever change there is, is in just the other direction. Perhaps, however, in the eyes of the sanguine Democrat, this in itself

may seem one of the very signs we ask for. He may argue that the desire for inequality, if it were less in the past than it is in the present, may in the future be less than it was in the past. Plainly, he will say, it is not constant but variable ; and who shall fix the limits of its variation ? But the glimmer of hope afforded by this argument fades instantly when we come to inspect it closely. The desire for inequality, there is not the smallest doubt, has at various times varied very widely in its importance ; but it has varied only as related to other motives ; it has not varied as related to productive labour. Other motives, at times, may have very nearly eclipsed it, but when this has been the case we shall always find infallibly that productive labour has been nearly eclipsed also ; and conversely, whenever productive labour has risen into importance and has eclipsed other occupations, in exact proportion we shall find that other motives have become eclipsed by the desire for inequality. This has apparently been true in every age of the world ; and, unlikely as it

him, therefore, for practical purposes, there can be no discussion. In incalculable time, incalculable things may happen. But if any thinker ventures to be more definite, and, clearly stating the change which is at this moment in question, maintains that it will occur within any time that is appreciable—if he maintains that in twenty-five years, or in fifty, or even in a hundred, or a hundred and fifty, the desire for inequality will have not only ceased to be operative, but that some other motive will be doing its work instead of it, then at once we shall know what to say to him. We shall ask him, if he can, to show us any sign whatever either in the present or the past, or in the present as compared with the past, which may lead us to think that such a change is even possible. In the present, as we have seen, there is no such sign apparent ; on the contrary, the desire for inequality is, as a motive, more powerful now than ever ; and whatever change there is, is in just the other direction. Perhaps, however, in the eyes of the sanguine Democrat, this in itself



thinking or hoping that the human character within any calculable period will, in this respect, either change or even tend to change. The desire for inequality itself may, no doubt, dwindle some day ; but if it do so, production will dwindle also, and our material civilisation will wholly, or in part, vanish from us. That event is even more than possible. We may lose some day both the desire and the civilisation ; but we shall never keep the latter in any state of society which does not excite, and which does not gratify the former.

Our examination, however, of the causes by which civilisation is maintained, is not yet complete. We have thus far dealt only with the highest grades of labour ; it still remains for us to deal with the lowest, on which all the rest are based, and without which they would be wholly powerless to exert themselves. Now the motive, as I have said already, that produces the lowest grade of labour is not the desire for inequality, it is the desire for a subsistence ; and such labour, as I have said already also, has no natural tendency to

subserve civilisation at all. When savages have produced enough to satisfy their necessary wants, they are as wholly incapable of producing anything further, as if, after that point, their entire bodies were paralysed. They are raised out of this state of helplessness, and the rudiments of a faculty for civilised labour are added to them only by some such process as that symbolised in our parable of the stranger and the islanders. A minority, in some way or other, must apply force to the majority; it must virtually possess itself of the food-supply of the latter; and in this way cause the labour which is motivated by the want of food to do more than satisfy the wants by which it is motivated. Historically, this application of force began with conquest and the institution of slavery; and as its operation there must be plain to even the least careful observer, I will ask the reader again to direct his attention to that.


We have hitherto considered the existence of social inequality simply as supplying a motive to men who desired to rise. If, how-

ever, we look at the case of slavery, we shall see that it acts upon labour in another way also. It not only supplies motives, but it conditions motives. A common slave received no more food in his servitude than he would naturally have secured for himself in his freedom. He was roused into industry by no new object of desire ; but merely by the fact that what he had desired always, was now so placed that he had to take a new road to get to it. And the changed position in which he thus found himself, was essentially a position brought about by force. He not only himself had no wish to be put in it, but he could not have put himself in it, even if he had wished to do so. He could not possibly, by any endeavours of his own, have so applied to himself his own desire for food that it should cause him to do three times the work naturally required to satisfy it. The added power which, in his servitude, this motive had over him, was a power derived from a source wholly external to himself—not from a desire for any inequality on his own part, but from the pressure put on

him by an inequality already achieved by others.

Now in the case of an unskilled slave, during the early stages of progress, this fact is obvious. All civilisations, as I remarked in a former chapter, have begun against the will of the majority of the human beings concerned in them. Social inequality, at first, has been always inequality in force, or, if we like to put it bluntly, it has been neither more nor less than oppression. But when we pass from the ancient world to the modern, from the age of the slave to the age of the free labourer, it is not perhaps obvious, as regards this special question, what has happened during the transition. How, in the manner in which the motive to labour acts upon him, does the unskilled free labourer differ from the unskilled slave? In many of his circumstances he, of course, differs profoundly. He cannot be sold; he can move from place to place; he can choose his own work, and his own master; above all, he can save, and as long as his savings last him, no living being can compel

him to labour at all. But whenever, and in so far as unskilled labour is being done by him, he is essentially in the same position as the slave: the labour he is doing is motivated in such a way that it does more than satisfy the wants by which it is motivated. That is, whenever he produces anything, he is obliged to produce more than personally he has any wish to produce—or more, in other words, than he would be able to produce without some external force acting on him. Here then, in our latest civilisation, we encounter the same fact which we have just noted in the earliest. We find that the lower forms of labour can be made productive only by the application of force in some way to the labourer. It appears, therefore, that in the gradual abolition of slavery, what has really happened has been this. The force that once resided in one dominant class has gradually passed from that into the structure of society generally. The unskilled labourer has ceased to be at the mercy of a master; but the force that the master once applied to him capri-



ciously, is now applied to him instead by his whole social environment, and that not capriciously, but with the regularity of a natural law. We thus see that the greatest of all changes that has ever taken place in the conditions of production, has not connoted the very smallest change in the constitution of the human character. To produce the same amount of labour, the same motives and the same force must be applied now as ever ; and the only change or improvement that has ever taken place, has not been in the things applied, but merely in the method of the application.

The maintenance of civilisation, then, depends upon two processes, the constant development of the higher forms of labour, and the constant intensification of the lower ; and in each case equally the cause that operates is inequality. In the first, it operates by producing a desire for itself in the labourer ; in the second it operates by exerting a certain pressure upon him. In the one case it attracts, in the other case it propels. But in both cases, in one way, what it does is the

• same. In both cases it endows the labourer with powers which, in its absence, would be wholly wanting in him. In its absence there could be no continued industry, just as in its absence there could be no developed skill. If we would ever scientifically grasp the great social problem, we must never lose sight of this fundamental truth. Man's power of producing more than a livelihood depends upon causes that are without him, and not within him; and these causes consist essentially, and they always have consisted since the earliest dawn of history, in some arrangement, more or less effective, of marked social inequalities.

CHAPTER X.

INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL PROGRESS.

WE have now considered the world's material civilisation under each of its three aspects, its rise, its progress, and its maintenance; and in each case we have found the cause of it to be either the desire for, or else the pressure of, inequality. In the absence of this cause, civilisation has been also absent; with the decline of it, civilisation has declined. With regard then to the future, the deduction is inevitable. Any social changes that tend to abolish inequalities, will tend also to destroy or to diminish our civilisation.

This statement, however, must be taken with certain limitations, or it may else be easily distorted by a perverse or a slovenly thinker. Although where there are no inequalities, there will be no civilised produc-

tion, and where there are inequalities there will be civilised production, it is by no means meant that production always increases in exact proportion to the magnitude of the inequalities, or that it need always be diminished in exact proportion to the diminution of them. Thus under the old *régime* in France, as the inequalities became greater, it is notorious that production became less ; and conversely, in the same country, as the inequalities have become less, the production has become greater. To any one, however, who has understood the foregoing arguments, this will seem only natural. Inequality influences production not by existing only, but by existing as an object of desire on the one hand, and as a means of pressure on the other. Its power over the skilled labourer depends on the chances he has of achieving it ; its power over the unskilled labourer depends on the way in which it can apply pressure to him. Now in the first case, if inequality be too hard to achieve, its influence, as an object of desire, will be almost as little as if it did not exist at

all ; and in the second case, if its pressure be too severe, it may cripple labour in the very act of causing it. Its efficiency, therefore, as the cause of civilised production, will increase with its magnitude only within certain limits. Further, these limits will themselves vary considerably in different cases. They will be different in England from what they are in Ireland ; they will be different in China from what they are in the United States. They will differ according to the temperament, the political history, and the occupations, of each separate people. But these differences will be altogether accidental. Precisely the same principle will be found to underlie all of them. Inequality, as it increases, will in every case increase production, until by its magnitude it begins to cause despair or indifference rather than hope in the skilled labourer ; and misery and weakness instead of resolve in the unskilled. As soon as it increases beyond this point production will diminish ; as soon as it decreases towards this point again, production again will increase. This latter process,

however, is no movement towards the abolition of inequality ; it tends, on the contrary, to set it on its broadest basis, and not to lessen, but merely to distribute the effects of it. It affords, therefore, no exception to the general law we have arrived at : that any social changes that tend to abolish inequalities will tend also to destroy or to diminish our civilisation.

Now this, very likely, in the present condition of thought, will at first strike most of us as a somewhat disheartening conclusion. To the Democrat, of course, if he ever be brought to assent to it, it must be the death-blow of all his hopes ; but when it is bluntly and nakedly put before us, it may dishearten many who are very far from being Democrats. For with regard to the poorer classes, what it means is obvious. It means that until the world again relapses into barbarism their own distance from the rich can never be appreciably diminished ; and, further, that in such a relapse they would not rise towards riches, but the rich would sink towards poverty, and they themselves would sink towards pri-

vation. If, however, instead of yielding to our first impressions, we examine scientifically the real facts of the situation, the most ardent philanthropist need find little cause in it for disappointment.

Material civilisation is a desirable thing for one reason only. It is desirable only because, and in so far as, it increases human happiness. If riches were supposed to make men miserable, no Democrat would ever wish to distribute them. He wishes to distribute them only because he believes they make men happy; and he wishes to distribute them equally because he believes that happiness is, in a general way, proportionate to them. Now it is on this last belief that our whole view of the question depends. If it really seems to us a disheartening reflection that we shall have '*the poor always with us,*' it can only be because we believe this—that the poor man, as such, must be always unhappier than the rich man, and that his life will be pitiable in exact proportion to his poverty. I said, it will be recollected, that this belief was the first article in the creed

of modern democracy, and that creed, I said further, was accepted by many people as a misgiving who would repudiate it indignantly as an affirmation. But if this be true, as I believe it is, of the democratic creed in general, it is yet more true of this particular portion of it. It has often been remarked that, in the history of modern sentiment, one of the most prominent features is the wide development of pity, and by pity is meant generally a recognition of the physical and moral misery in the world, together with a wish that such misery might be alleviated. Now misery of both kinds is no doubt greater amongst the poor than amongst the rich ; and modern thought, fixing itself on that fact, has in a very singular way arrived at two conclusions—firstly, that poverty is the cause of the bulk of human misery ; and secondly, that the bulk of human misery can only be alleviated by some general equalisation of existing material inequalities. Thus in the present condition of things that feeling or wish which is commonly called pity or benevolence is not really a single wish, but a double

one. To the wish that misery might be alleviated there is added a second wish as to the special means for its alleviation, namely, the wish for social equality; and these two so instantly coalesce that in the popular mind it is very difficult to distinguish them. Whether this be the effect of the avowed democratic movement, or whether it be the cause of it, is beside our present purpose to inquire. It is enough for us here to recognise that, by some means or other, the benevolent sentiment, as it now exists in the world, certainly has allied itself with the wish for social equality, not only amongst those who think social equality attainable, but even amongst many who altogether despair of its attainment.

If, however, we except the doctrine that the cause of wealth is labour, there has never been a fallacy with regard to social subjects so great as that which the above alliance is based upon; nor until the world in general has learnt utterly to discard it will any sound conception of the social problem be possible. What is requisite in this case for a right under-

standing of the truth is nothing more than was requisite in the question of wealth and labour. It is simply to apply the inductive method accurately, to blot out for the time every picture of the imagination, to silence for the time every whisper of sympathy, and to observe the facts of life, on which the points at issue turn, as they actually are and have been. Those facts are of a perfectly unmistakable order ; they are the facts of human happiness as affected by material circumstances, and we have all practically such unlimited means for observing them that the task before us will be to arrange rather than to collect our evidence.

What, then, does this evidence teach us? In the first place, it teaches us that amongst the very richest of men numbers have lived and died full of disappointment and bitterness, and that amongst the poor numbers have lived and died contented. This fact, though so wholly lost sight of in the social speculations that have marked the present century, is yet in itself so notorious and so nearly self-evident that it would be almost an impertinence to

support it by special instances ; and not less evident than the fact itself is the general inference that inevitably follows from it. It follows from it that however, in many cases, happiness may be increased by an increase of riches, it does not necessarily bear any proportion to them, and that if the poor as a rule are less happy than the rich, this is not due to their not possessing luxuries, but to some other cause of a wholly distinct nature.

Should this seem a hard saying to any one, he may easily test the truth of it by an appeal to his own experience ; and if he be a rich man, and accustomed to luxurious living, he will be able to do this only the more readily. Such a man, as soon as he begins to reflect at all, will see how, within limits, luxury is wholly relative. That is, he will see how the very same material circumstances which he would think miserable on one occasion, he will think luxurious on another. He travels, we will say, from Paris to Nice in a sleeping-car, and he looks on himself as in the very lap of luxury, because he lies on a spring mattress,

and because he has a whole compartment to himself. Suppose, however, at his journey's end he were offered a bedroom at his hotel which was the exact facsimile of that compartment, and instead of a place of luxury he would think it a stifling den. Or let him take, if he is a sportsman, his own life as a deer-stalker, and compare it with his life as a man of fashion in London. Whereas in London, probably, he will hardly venture out in a shower, and will take a hansom sooner than walk a furlong, in Scotland he will think nothing of either fatigue or weather. He will exert his muscles more, he will face greater hardship than the commonest day-labourer ; and the man who in Piccadilly would barely put his foot in a puddle will lie by the hour on the damp ground in Inverness-shire. And yet if he compare his two modes of life together—his life as a deer-stalker and his life in the world of London—he will see that, in his own opinion and that of the world in general, the former is as much a life of luxury as the latter, and is even more distinctive of the

richest and most luxurious classes. If, then, the rich man, who is accustomed to the softest living, can thus find the hardest living to be actually at times a luxury, he will scarcely be able to doubt that the hardest living to the poor man need not in itself be any cause of misery.¹

What makes it difficult for the rich at first to realise this is that they naturally look at the matter through the distorting medium of the imagination. They look on the poor, in fact, as rich people ruined, and conceive of them as missing comforts that they have never

¹ It may be also noticed that, in all ages, many have held the opinion that not only does poverty not necessarily make men unhappy, but that it is in itself, and apart from accidental evils, more calculated to make them happy than riches are.

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expresses a view by no means confined to Virgil. It is a proverbial saying in our own day, that when a rich man complains of unhappiness, the best advice to give him is *to live on sixpence a day. and earn it*; and curiously enough the very Democrats and Radicals, whose chief occupation is to hold the rich up to envy, are perpetually sneering at them, as though they were objects of pity. The above opinion is no doubt as false, in a general way, as its opposite. I only note its existence to show how loose and inaccurate is current thought with regard to the whole question involved in it.

even heard of. The poor, too, on their side, do an exactly similar thing. They look on the rich through the medium of the imagination also, and just as the rich attribute to them a wholly imaginary misery, so they attribute to the rich a wholly imaginary happiness. In this, however, as in so many other cases, it is the chief function of scientific thought to correct the beliefs which the imagination thus distorts for us ; and if we only surrender ourselves here to its clear and impartial guidance, we shall see the foregoing conclusion to be altogether indisputable. Happiness and the possession of riches, unhappiness and the want of riches, are not in any way necessarily correlative. The bulk, therefore, of human unhappiness has nothing whatever to do with the existence of social inequalities, nor is there the least reason to despair of the world's future merely because these inequalities can never be done away with.

What shall we say, then, when wretched cases reach us, of destitution, and hunger, and squalor, and pain from cold ? What shall we

say of the foul, unhealthy houses—of the crowded courts and alleys in which millions of our poor are lodged? What we shall say is obvious. We shall say that these evils are caused by want, not that they are caused by inequality. We shall say that misery is miserable, not that inequality is miserable. The sufferings of the poor are not caused by their having little as compared with the rich; but by their having little as compared with the simplest demands of human nature. It is in no way a sad thing that one man should be dining off turtle and ortolans, and another man off a plate of beans and bacon. What is a sad thing is that one man should be dining off turtle and ortolans, and another man have next to no dinner at all. So, too, it is in no way a sad thing that one man should live in a palace, and another man in a small cottage. What is a sad thing is, that while one man lives in a healthy house, so many other men live in unhealthy ones. Once let the poorest of the population be sufficiently clothed and fed, and so lodged as to be free from filth and

fever, and it will be perfectly possible then that the poor, taken generally, may in point of happiness be as well off as the rich.

What, however, if this be the case, becomes of the main fact dwelt on in this volume, namely, the influence on human action of the desire for social inequality? If the unequal distribution of wealth has so little to do with the unequal distribution of happiness, how can the desire for an unequal share of wealth be the one great motive that produces and maintains civilisation? To answer this, we need only appeal again to facts of human character that are within the knowledge of all of us. First, however, let the reader observe this. It has not been said that riches and poverty have no connection with happiness and unhappiness; it has been said only that they have no necessary connection. Under certain conditions they are connected; and under certain conditions they are not connected. We have now to inquire what these conditions are.

We may, to begin, then, say as a general

rule that riches are essential to happiness in exact proportion as we are accustomed to them ; and that poverty is necessarily a cause of unhappiness, not because it cannot supply us with luxuries, but only when, and in so far as, it deprives us of them. It thus follows that the richer a man is, he is, not happier than the poorer men below him, but for the same amount of happiness more dependent on riches. Hence, though he may have no desire to become more rich than he is, he will have a very strong desire not to become more poor. He will desire to maintain his inequality, though he will not desire to increase it. The desire for inequality, then, can take two forms. It can take the form, not only of a desire to rise, but the form also of a desire to remain stationary. It may therefore be a constant cause of labour, even in cases where no discontent is implied in it ; and a large proportion of its power is of this latter kind. When it takes, on the other hand, the form of a desire to rise, then no doubt the matter is somewhat different. The man who desires to

rise must, from that very fact, be discontented to some degree with his existing circumstances; but when a man's discontent is such that he can see his way to removing the cause of it, and when it thus becomes the motive of hopeful action, it is a source of happiness, not a source of misery to him. Now if we examine the conditions under which the desire to rise develops itself, we shall find that the discontent involved in it is essentially of this pleasurable kind. The human character, it will be found, is so constituted that a man's desire for things he does not possess is not in proportion to their desirableness, but in proportion to the ease with which they seem attainable. Thus most country gentlemen would be pleased at being made peers, but their way to the honour must be more or less plain to them before the want of it gives them the least uneasiness. And in all classes of society a similar thing holds good. Putting out of the question cases of actual want, man is naturally contented with whatever conditions he is accustomed to until some better conditions are put before

him, not only by his imagination as being better, but by his reason as being within his reach. It will be found further that when his imagination and his reason act in their normal way, these better conditions are rarely very far in advance of his own. They are a step in advance, but a step only ; and though he may know that each step he takes he will see another beyond that, yet what, at any given time, his happiness really depends upon, is merely the one he is actually engaged in taking. Thus a man who starts in life with the wish to die a prime minister, at first depends for his happiness on being returned to Parliament. The desire to rise, in fact, when it is more than an idle wish is naturally limited to what is near at hand ; and is strong in proportion to the prospects of its being satisfied. Thus the more operative it is in maintaining and advancing civilisation, the more does it become an element not of unhappiness, but of happiness ; nor does its presence in a poor man prove that poverty is necessarily miser-

able, any more than its presence in a rich man proves that riches are.

Here again, however, another perplexity may present itself. It may be asked, if the human character be such as it has just been said to be, and if such be the natural action of the desire for inequality, how are we to account for the rise and spread amongst the masses, not only of a desire, but even of a passion for equality? The answer to this question, though complex, is not difficult; and the full materials for it are in our hands already. We have seen, then, that equality, in the modern sense of the word, is not equality in the abstract, but an equality in material wealth. We have seen further that of the actual enjoyments the wealthy get from wealth the poorer classes have no conception whatsoever. Wealth to them is an object of desire only, as a supposed key to some state of unknown happiness, and a supposed means of escape out of every known unhappiness. Thus equality, as presented by the modern Democrats to the people, means a condition of

richest and most luxurious classes. If, then, the rich man, who is accustomed to the softest living, can thus find the hardest living to be actually at times a luxury, he will scarcely be able to doubt that the hardest living to the poor man need not in itself be any cause of misery.¹

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gress, is not practicable or impracticable, true or false, according to the completeness or incompleteness of the meaning we attach to it; but that it is not a condition to which we should make any efforts to approximate; and that, so far from being in any way a goal of progress, it is, on the contrary, the goal of retrogression instead. Conversely, I have tried to demonstrate further, that inequality, so far from being an accidental evil of civilisation, is the efficient cause of its development and of its present maintenance; that the distance of the poor from the rich is not the cause to the former of their poverty, as distinct from riches, but of their civilised competence as distinct from barbarism; and that if ever any changes that have really advanced civilisation have had the appearance of a movement towards equality, this appearance has either been deceptive altogether, or has been else due to a coincidence, not to any real identity; the movement in question having been not towards equality, but towards a more efficient arrangement of inequalities.

It is to the exhibition of this one great truth that I have confined myself. I have not discussed the various forms that inequality may assume; and I have purposely avoided the question of the position and the function of a class wholly unconnected with production, such as a landed aristocracy; because, though the existence of such a class may, under certain circumstances, supply an extraordinary stimulus to mercantile and manufacturing enterprise, yet it is plainly not essential, as the case of America shows us, to material civilisation of a very advanced kind. Its effects are moral, rather than directly industrial; and, as such, they demand separate treatment. I have, however, observed already, that the chief feature in the position of a landed aristocracy which the modern agitator has succeeded in rendering odious to the people is, not its unproductiveness, but its inequality. And as to inequality, it is perfectly certain that the masses see practically no difference whatever between the commercial or manufacturing plutocrat, and the peer or the

country gentleman ; or if they do see any difference, it is rather in favour of the latter. Thus, although the arguments I have dwelt upon in this brief volume have not touched on the question of the uses of a landed aristocracy, they will show that the chief feature of it which Radicals and Democrats are able to *exploiter* as an evil, is a feature they themselves would be still obliged to retain, and in a form, if anything, even more marked and offensive.

But these observations are beside my present mark. The main importance of a recognition of the doctrine of inequality, is not the added security that it would give the rich, but the added hopes of progress it would hold out to the poor. Conservatism, no doubt, during the present century, has shown itself at times as obstructive as well as a conserving power ; but for this the party of progress has chiefly itself to thank. If its schemes for wide redress of evils and grievances amongst the poor have been opposed or neglected, as they have been, this has been partly due, no doubt,

to prejudice ; partly, no doubt, to a mistaken class-selfishness ; but chiefly to the fact that these schemes themselves have been based on a theory wholly at variance with the facts of human nature, and which the common sense of mankind, when undisturbed by passion, has instinctively recognised as at once chimerical and ruinous. In other words, the theory of social equality, by identifying the hopes of the poor, with the attainment of a Utopia on the one hand, and the destruction of all society on the other, has been more influential than any other cause, not only in perpetuating, but even in increasing the evils consequent on the modern developments of civilisation. It has made the prosperous poor discontented with circumstances which would naturally make them happy ; and it has shut out the suffering poor from their best hopes of progress by teaching them to mask their demand for what would really benefit them in a demand for something that would be the ruin of themselves and everybody. It has placed them in an utterly false position. Instead of making

civilisation the friend of the poor, it has duped the poor into making themselves the enemies of civilisation.

It is never wise to yield to hope too easily ; but were the modern theory of equality once abandoned and discredited, there are abundant grounds, I believe, for a sober assurance that the cause of the poor and suffering would receive almost instantly an incalculable accession of strength. The wealth, the culture, the wisdom, the philanthropy, which are now forced unwillingly to regard that cause with suspicion, if not to oppose it, would in an instant be arrayed upon its side ; and the suicidal movement, which at present passes for progress, would begin to be in reality what it now is only in name.

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